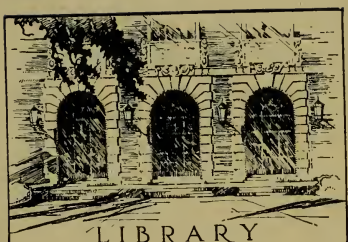

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
M194
v. 2

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2008 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/privatelife02mack

PRIVATE LIFE.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

PRIVATE LIFE;

OR,

VARIETIES OF CHARACTER AND OPINION.

In Two Volumes.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "GERALDINE," &c. &c.

Mary Jane Mackintosh

"All pages of human life are worth reading; the wise instruct, the gay divert us, the imprudent teach us what to shun, the absurd cure the spleen." MRS. MONTAGUE.

"There is much to be said on both sides, observed Mr. Equipoise."

VOL. II.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, STRAND;
AND W. BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH.
1829.

823
M194
v.2

PRIVATE LIFE.

CHAPTER XXIX.

" In fair variety of green
The woodland lends its sylvan skreen;
Hoary, yet haughty, frowns the oak,
Its boughs by weight of ages broke;
The drooping ash and birch between
Hang their fair tresses o'er the green,
And all beneath at random grow,
Each coppice dwarf of varied show."

ROKEBY.

" Up and away! for lovely paths are these
To tread when the glad sun is on his throne;
Less pleasant and less safe when Cynthia's lamp,
With doubtful glimmer, lights the dreary forest."

ETTRICK FOREST.

ON resuming their walk, Constance, after a furtive glance at cousin Frances, who looked warm and wearied, proposed, instead of crossing the heath, to shorten the distance by turn

125087

ing to the left, and taking a winding path through the wood, which would cut off a considerable angle. — Nothing could be more delightful than the entrance of the wood: — the last beams of the sun threw a rich light on the boles of the trees, and a brilliant checkering over the path; but as the party proceeded, the sun disappeared, the path gradually narrowed, and at length presented a mass of tangled boughs, and projecting roots, which it was somewhat difficult to penetrate. — In the spring, when Constance had been accustomed to frequent the spot, in search of early primroses, no such obstacles were to be found, and she had not calculated upon the luxuriant vegetation of summer.

Mrs. Grenville, under the snug protection of a cottage-bonnet and an excellent temper, laughingly battled with the boughs, and stumbled over the roots, only rallying Constance, on her skill as a pilot; — but the patience of Frances waned rapidly, under the influence of an irritable temperament, and one of the spreading hats, that began to be rife in the world of fashion about this time. — Every step was exasperation: — the equilibrium of the hat was

perpetually disturbed by its rude contact with the closely-woven boughs: — first, some rough hazel twigs laid claim to the bow on one side, and then an untractable thorn seized the veil on the other: — the indignation of Frances became every moment more uncontrollable; — it was in vain that Constance predicted a speedy amelioration of their lot, — in vain she promised that five minutes would restore them to light and liberty; — it was in vain that she apologised for herself, and the tangled underwood, in the most penitent tone; — her consolations and excuses were alike rejected. — Frances was not to be appeased: — it was really abominable conduct, — conduct that she should not easily forget, — to be dragged through such a place, absolutely at the peril of her life, — and all for the amusement of Constance; — it was treatment not to be endured. — The penitence of Constance was unluckily quenched in a moment by this accusative style.

" I have exhausted my whole stock of apologies," said she, in a tone rather cold and high; — " and have now only patience to recommend, for I am afraid no kind enchanter will clear the path by magic."

At length they emerged from their leafy labyrinth; and after mounting a stile sufficiently high to quicken the indignation of Frances, found themselves in a green meadow, under the open canopy of heaven. — But here an unlooked for impediment arose, in the shape of a fine herd of cattle, grouped close by the path they were to pursue: — no sooner had Frances caught a view of them, than in a tone of dogged resolution, she avowed her determination not to stir a single step till they moved off.

"They are only Farmer Gray's cows," said Mrs. Grenville, in an encouraging accent.

"Only Farmer Gray's cows! and pray what security is there in the name of Farmer Gray?" enquired Frances, pettishly: "I am sure I shall not attempt to pass them."

"They appear to me to be fixed there for the night, however," said Constance, eyeing them composedly: — "they have just that still, motionless, evening look, that Cuyp gives them in his landscapes."

"You take the matter very coolly, indeed, after bringing one into such a situation," observed Frances: — "however, I am resolved not to stir a step, till they think proper to move."

" A contest of patience between the irrationals, and us rationals, so called by courtesy," said Constance, laughing: — " I suspect the cows will win the day."

Mrs. Grenville pointed to the west, where the gorgeous pageantry of the clouds was fast fading into the sober hue of twilight.

" We shall be quite benighted, I am afraid," said she: — " come, Frances, take my arm, and let us venture: remember, we are nearly two miles from home."

" Go, go, by all means," returned Frances; — " but I shall remain here: — I shall not stir."

" Oh! we can pass the night *al fresco*, in the wood, if you please," said Constance: — " it will be quite a treat: — we can kindle a fire at midnight if we are cold: — but do you think, mamma, in that case we could accomplish striking a light?" and she began rubbing two dry sticks together very energetically. — " Alas! helpless fine lady that I am!" said she, " not a spark will come."

" I believe we must be content to retrace our steps, and return by the wood," said Mrs. Grenville, appealing to Frances.

"You will as easily persuade me to step into purgatory," said Frances, resolutely.

Mrs. Grenville listened to this decision in hopeless perplexity; and after a pause, betook herself to panegyrising the gentleness of the cows.

"They look remarkably quiet, particularly gentle," said she, "with an emphasis on the two adverbs, and advancing towards the herd with that noiseless and reverential caution which ladies practise in such rencounters."

"Yes, you will set them all off; — that is what you will accomplish, Mrs. Grenville," exclaimed Frances, as one of the animals moved a few paces forward, and fixed on the party that sedate, steady, protracted gaze to which cows are prone. — "Never will I pass that creature," continued she with increased energy, and retreating towards the stile, — "never."

Constance and her mother now exchanged a few words of consultation, *sotto voce;* — but in the midst of their deliberations, the welcome sound of a voice whistling a tune caught their ear. — Constance darted across the meadow, and returned in triumph with a sturdy boy,

about three feet and a half high, whom she introduced as Dick Green: — his costume consisted of a pair of ragged trousers, a still more ragged jacket, one shoe and a half, and a quarter of a hat.

"Here is a champion for you," said she, laughing, and out of breath. — "Never was knight errant more welcome to a distressed damsel: — he undertakes to drive away the cows."

And very soon, to Mrs. Grenville's inexpressible relief, after a few cabalistic words uttered by Dick, the whole herd began to move; — even the steady gazer, though the least disposed for a ramble, was at length detached, and followed slowly in the rear, now and then admonished to mend her pace by a pebble flung from the hand of Dick.

"What an inestimable talent!" exclaimed Constance. "I really must take private lessons of Dick, and endeavour to acquire that invaluable language."

"We had better quicken our pace," said Mrs. Grenville; "for we shall soon have only the stars and the glow-worms to light us home."

"And what can be more delightful than this soft twilight?" said Constance: — "there is something so delicious in its stillness, I am not surprised that it has so often inspired the poet and the painter: — after all the abuse that has been heaped on our climate, I should be sorry to exchange such twilight for the sudden sunsets of more glowing regions."

"In my opinion, there is something particularly melancholy in twilight," said Frances. — "The very trees have a grim look; and what beauty can there be in dusky dulness? — Young ladies, indeed, think it romantic and poetical to admire it; but give me sunshine and daylight, — they are much better things."

"I must admire twilight," said Constance, "for the train of thoughts and feelings it excites, and for the poetical gems it has elicited, even at the hazard of being ranked in the proscribed class of romantic young ladies. All our most delightful poets have felt its influence, and added to its charms by their melodious descriptions. — It was but this morning I was conning over that beautiful passage of Milman's, —

> "'Come, the busy day is o'er,
> Spindles flying gleam no more;

Leave the toilsome task undone,
Leave the golden web unspun ;
Hark ! along the humming air
Home the laden bees repair,
And the bright and dashing rill,
From the side of every hill,
With a clearer, deeper sound,
Cools the freshening air around.' "

" I should like to know what you mean, Constance, by walking that snail's pace, and quoting poetry, at this time of night?" exclaimed Frances in great wrath : " I am sure it is perfectly provoking to see you both," continued she, including Mrs. Grenville in her reproof.

The ladies laughed, and quickened their pace. — Cousin Frances was one of those persons whose recollections and anticipations of misfortune are peculiarly vivid and active ; — she never would allow her friends to lose an iota of their share, either of retrospective or prospective evil : — if a disappointment had occurred, or any ill was to be apprehended, she was resolved to awaken them to a full sense of the calamity : — she disdained all the little arts of diversion, which Mrs. Grenville successfully practised ; — was rich in prophetic denunciations, and reproachful recollections ; and kept, for the

benefit of her friends, a dull register of her own wasted wisdom and slighted warnings. — Nothing could be more wearisome than this monotonous alternation of complaint and censure, from which you could be preserved only by a fit of sullenness : — her ill-humour in its active state might be compared to a mill-wheel at work, which produces a ceaseless recurrence of the same bewildering sound ; — and in its passive state, it was like the same object at rest, in all the sullenness of stagnation. — At this moment she was resolved to find no charm either in twilight or poetry — to derive no consolation from Mrs. Grenville's truism that every step brought them nearer home ; but she succeeded in some degree in spreading the infection of her own fears : — her companions looked up to the heavens, which were now gemmed with stars, and felt that a walk even on a summer night might be late and lonely ; — except the querulous complaints of Frances, nothing was heard but the distant bay of a dog, or the rustle of the leaves as the night breeze stirred them. — Even the good night of the peasant, as he " homeward bent his weary way," fell with a sudden and startling sound upon the ear.

"In ten minutes we shall be at the Priory," said Mrs. Grenville, in a cheerful tone, as they entered a lane which skirted one side of the park, and which was shady even at noon, from the high over-arching boughs: — "I always feel at home in this lane."

But, alas! the comfortable hopes and feelings her words inspired were sadly transient; — sounds of boisterous and drunken merriment now assailed their ear: — the voices drew nearer; and even Mrs. Grenville, though she said not a word, began to feel her heart beat with inconvenient quickness.

"A pretty predicament you have placed us in with your folly," exclaimed Frances: — "a fine situation, indeed; — pray, what upon earth are we to do?"

"If we could but climb the bank, and hide ourselves behind that high tree till they have passed, we should be quite safe," said Constance.

Mrs. Grenville demurred; — and after measuring with her eye the height of the bank and the breadth of cousin Frances, pronounced the scheme to be impracticable: — she felt a secret conviction that the good lady would probably

remain suspended between earth and heaven, like Baillie Jarvis on the rocks of Aberfoyle.

"I dare say they will let us pass quietly," said Mrs. Grenville, with no very great confidence in her own cheering suggestion.

"I dare say no such thing," returned Frances: — "to be sure you have managed charmingly. — Well, I must say, I do like a little common sense."

At this moment, the sound of horses' feet advancing at a brisk pace was heard.

"Now we are to be run over, I suppose," said Frances: — "for as to seeing, that is quite out of the question."

The ladies filed off close to the bank, to avoid the new danger: — but seeing was not quite so much out of the question as Frances had supposed: — the white dress of Constance had arrested the attention of the traveller: — he checked his speed, and in a moment they were challenged by Sir Henry: — his voice was music to their ears, and comfort to their hearts: — he instantly gave his horse to his groom, and attended the party.

"I admire your courage," said he: — "this is a pleasure I certainly did not expect."

" Why, indeed, sir, you may well be surprised to see gentlewomen prowling about unattended at this time of night," said Frances: — " but some people have strange notions of propriety."

" If we chose to tell tales of ourselves," said Mrs. Grenville, laughing, " I am afraid your admiration of our courage would speedily subside. — I am afraid we should have to plead guilty to a full share of womanish cowardice."

" You would not find less favour in my eyes on that score," replied Sir Henry : — " indeed, I should much prefer such an extreme, to more than a feminine complement of courage."

" It is rather a nice point to adjust," said Mrs. Grenville : — " the courage of absolute independence is perhaps not very graceful in woman ; but the courage of good sense is indispensable."

" I like it when it is not of too sturdy a nature," said Sir Henry ; — " when it does not interfere with the established order of things — that we are to protect, and you to be protected."

" As far as we are personally concerned, then," said Constance, laughing, " we are just what you can wish — as arrant cowards as any

in Christendom. — I gave myself up for lost ten minutes ago, at the sound of a shout of laughter — and you might have heard mamma and cousin Frances tremble."

"To say the truth," said Mrs. Grenville, "the sound of your voice dispelled a thousand ugly phantoms which our fears had conjured up."

"Oh! it was like the joy of waking from a frightful dream!" exclaimed Constance, — "the voice of a friend at such a moment."

"Yes, and that friend of the more noble gender, as the Latin grammar ungallantly affirms," added Mrs. Grenville.

"Alas!" said Sir Henry, — "flattering as all this is, to man as a species, I am afraid that, individually, I have nothing to be grateful for. — I am afraid that the voice of a groom or ploughman would have wrought just as happy a change as that of his master."

"Why it must be confessed," said Constance, "that our hearts were warmed into an emotion similar in nature, if not equal in degree, half an hour ago by a hero with whom I fear you are unacquainted. — I will take the earliest opportunity of introducing you to each other; —

but you really must be content to share the burden of our gratitude with Dick Green."

Sir Henry, after lamenting his own hard fate, enquired into the nature of Dick's services.

"Cruel!" exclaimed Constance, "to insist on our recounting the perils of the evening, — to recall painful feelings."

"Nay, even wise philosophers agree," returned Sir Henry, "that it is pleasant, after escaping a shipwreck, to talk of the dangers of the storm."

"Well, then," said Constance, playfully, — "we have passed through woods impervious to the noontide beam; — we have trodden paths where mortal footsteps rarely stray; — we have been encompassed by *gazing* and *grazing* foes, and escaped their machinations only through the prowess of our champion Dick; — we have heard fearful sounds, and might have seen fearful sights, but for the appearance, sudden as welcome, of a gallant knight not unknown to fame."

"And who had the honour," continued Sir Henry, taking up her tone, and gallantly kissing her hand, "to guard these ladies to their bower, and there bid them adieu, with reluctant heart and lingering footstep."

He bowed and withdrew; and Constance walked into the house, with a gay step, congratulating the party upon their safe arrival at home, and the happy termination of their adventures.

Not so cousin Frances: — she stalked across the hall, solemn, sullen, and indignant, like the ghost in Hamlet. — Mrs. Grenville wasted a considerable portion of sympathy and regret on the aggrieved lady; and vainly recommended the contents of the cellar and pantry. — Her outraged feelings were not to be thus propitiated: — in unbroken silence, she rang the bell for her maid, and swept out of the room in dignified displeasure.

CHAP. XXX.

" But conversation, choose what theme we may,
And chiefly when religion leads the way,
Should flow like waters after summer showers;
Not as if raised by mere mechanic powers:
The song of Sion is a tasteless thing,
Unless, when rising on a joyful wing,
The soul can mix with the celestial bands,
And give the strain the compass it demands."

COWPER.

THE next morning found Frances in the same sullen mood. — Mrs. Grenville proposed a walk to the Rectory, for the double purpose of dissipating the lady's spleen, and of inviting Mr. Mortimer and Gerard to dinner the following day; but Frances declined walking, and Constance was commissioned to be the bearer of the invitation. — During her walk, she made many wise reflections upon the waywardness of human nature in general, and upon the whims and peculiarities of the individual specimen which at present enriched the Priory. — Mr. Mortimer's kind, welcome, and cheerful tones,

soon, however, changed the current of her thoughts. — The invitation was readily accepted; and, after a little desultory chat, Gerard, addressing Constance, said, "We were discussing an interesting subject when you came into the room: — I was asking my father's opinion as to the possibility and propriety of turning conversation to account in a religious point of view. I cannot help thinking that more might be done in this way by those really interested in the subject."

"Perhaps," replied Constance, "the very depth and intensity of our feelings on this subject may interfere with our expression of them; — the hopes and fears and privileges of a Christian are holy ground; too sacred to be trodden without caution and reverence."

"And may not both be used?" said Mr. Mortimer. — "Religious gossip, indeed, (and I have often heard such) is as unprofitable as any other gossip: — religious controversy is dangerous ground; but Christianity itself, — so beautiful in the mercy of its origin — in the loveliness of its effects — in the sublimity of its hopes; — surely to talk on such a subject

would be pleasant exercise, both for the head and heart."

"Yes, in those delicious moments of our lives when we are encircled by dear familiar friends," observed Constance; — "but I should think in no other. — Who would dwell upon a theme which kindles the deepest emotion, to those with whom there exists no bond of sympathy in feeling, taste, and opinion?"

"Such complete dissonance is, or ought to be, of rare occurrence," said Mr. Mortimer: "there are sympathies that can never be destroyed between man and man; all are bound together by the golden band of charity; and many an opportunity of usefulness is lost by barriers of our own creating."

"But among the few specimens I have met with of persons who go into society with the intention and determination of talking religiously — *only* religiously," said Constance,—"how few manage the matter judiciously: — they either insist upon truisms, to which we have only to give an assenting bow; or they sermonise till a silent constraint steals over the circle, and every one is longing for the entrance of a servant, the

appearance of a tray, or any thing that can break the icy spell."

"I think with you," returned Mr. Mortimer, "that those who go into society, to talk *only* religiously, attempt what is impracticable and unwise. — Thorough, sound, deep-rooted religious principle, must discover itself in our intercourse with general society; — it will give a higher tone to moral feeling, an unblemished purity to mental taste; a decided bias to our opinions upon books, characters, and events;— and it is in this way, not by dogmatism and declamation, that it will do real good. — We must remember, however, that there may be some faults on both sides, — when the introduction of religious topics produces the constraint of which you complain: — there may be bad taste on the one side, but is there not also coldness, indifference, and sometimes even repugnance, on the other?"

"It is so, perhaps, *sometimes*," replied Constance; "but I do not think such feelings at all likely to be corrected by having the subject forced on the attention; — on the contrary, I have observed that persons of this cast consider such conversation as a species of religious

quackery, and turn from it with as much contempt as they would from the nostrums of an empiric."

"I can discover no reason," said Gerard, "why hour after hour should be passed in mere frivolous gossip, and a subject so comprehensive and delightful be studiously avoided. — Merely in an intellectual point of view, religion is deeply interesting. — Connected with all that is venerable in antiquity, with all that is curious in the history of past ages, it furnishes an inexhaustible fund of interest: — its rise and progress, its influence and effects in successive ages, diversified climates, and on dissimilar characters, open the richest and most varied field for contemplation."

"Yes, even the historical view of religion is wonderful," observed Mr. Mortimer: — "but when we look at it in its more peculiar character, as shedding the bright light of faith and hope over futurity, — awakening the best energies of the mind, — kindling the finest emotions of the heart, — subduing the passions, — quickening the affections, — teaching prosperity to be humble, and adversity to be confiding, anguish to be patient, and making death unappalling; — can any subject be more comprehensive, more

delightful, more deeply and permanently interesting?"

"But, my dear sir," said Constance, after a pause, "even in our own little circle, with how few do we feel that complete and peculiar sympathy, which can alone enable us to enjoy such a theme. — I have such a dread of cant and controversy, — of making a parade of religious sentiments and feelings; — it seems to me so entirely inconsistent with the lowly beauty of a Christian spirit, — with the quiet, unobtrusive character of real piety."

"Nothing can be more just than these sentiments, to a certain extent, my dear Miss Grenville," returned Mr. Mortimer: "but we must be careful not to permit a feeling in itself correct to outstep certain limits. — Why should not that communion of mind, which so enlarges our knowledge upon other subjects, be useful on the most momentous one?"

"Perhaps," said Gerard, "it is because, even in the quiet domestic circle, we are so little in the habit of conversing on such subjects, that we cannot do so with ease and enjoyment. The harp of Zion seems to breathe a strange sound, only because the hand that touches it is timid

and unpractised: — in time we should find its tones as various as they are delightful, — the very perfection of harmony."

"No one can dislike cant more than I do," observed Mr. Mortimer; "and it must be confessed, that there are some very excellent persons who forget the wise maxim, that 'to every thing there is a season,' — who introduce religious subjects with startling abruptness, and Scripture phrases with a familiarity almost irreverent. — But even these I do not condemn as ostentatious; — I believe that their principles are good, and their intentions pure, but that they are deficient in judgment and in taste."

"I confess," said Constance, "that I have sometimes been so completely disgusted with persons of this class, that I resolved never to open my lips on the subject of religion in general society as long as I lived."

"And thus mistake the reverse of wrong for right: — Oh! wise young judge! a second Daniel," said Mr. Mortimer, with a smile.

"But, indeed, you would have disliked them as much as I did, my dear sir," replied Constance.

"No! I should have thought them well-intentioned novices," observed Mr. Mortimer, "intent upon doing good, but not choosing the best means: — their motives would have claimed my respect, their want of judgment my pity."

"I think you have often told me that judgment is an improvable faculty, and that we are responsible for its cultivation," said Constance, archly; — "besides, I assure you the persons to whom I allude have a religious vocabulary peculiar to themselves, — a sort of technical jargon, scarcely intelligible to the uninitiated, — so that silence is the only refuge in this case."

"But silence might be supposed to indicate an indifference, which would do little credit, and, perhaps, little justice, to our real sentiments," observed Mr. Mortimer. "It is our duty to avoid the appearance of evil, and to make it quite apparent that it is not the subject but the manner of treating it that we disapprove. — Surely, to exclude it altogether as forbidden ground, is not a less blameable extreme; and if this be done, under the impression that it is too sacred to be touched upon, we make the same mistake as the miser, when he hides his gems

and gold in the earth, and thus renders them useless to the world and himself. I think it should be the aim of those who estimate time at its real value, to lead the conversation, in general society, to subjects that may exercise the mind; and to allow to serious ones their full share at our own fireside. — After our best endeavours, enough of life will be swallowed up in frivolous pursuits and trifling discussions,— in petty disquietudes and useless vexations; — too much will glide away, unmarked by that constant improvement of character, which ought to be our great and daily object. — And now, after this long sermon," added Mr. Mortimer, with a smile, "let me introduce you to my beautiful peaches, of which I am not a little proud." — He led the way to his garden, and was very soon busily initiating Constance into the mysteries of training and grafting.

CHAP. XXXI.

"It is a folly to talk of being *too* holy, *too* strict, or *too* good. Where there appears some foundation for the charge of enthusiasm, we may depend upon it that it proceeds from some defect in the judgment, not from any *excess* in the piety. There may be an *imprudent*, there cannot be a *superabundant* goodness. MRS. MORE

"I AM afraid I shall not be a very welcome guest," said Gerard Mortimer, upon joining the party at the Priory the following day; "for I am the bearer of an apology from my father: he was obliged to set off, a few hours ago, — for Devonshire."

"You are welcome, notwithstanding your unwelcome tidings," returned Mrs. Grenville. — "May we hope that Mr. Mortimer will not be long absent?"

"I am sorry to say, that his return is quite uncertain," replied Gerard: "he is called away by my uncle's sudden illness, and may be detained some weeks."

"Some weeks!" echoed Constance, in a tone of disappointment. — "What are we to do without him? — I am sure I never feel my mind in half such good tune as when Mr. Mortimer is near, to keep it in order: — it is impossible not to desire — not, indeed, to covet his approbation: — I really think a frown from Mr. Mortimer would make me sad for a week."

"He blends, in the happiest way, the cordiality of a friend with the sacred character of a pastor," added Mrs. Grenville.

Gerard listened to this testimony with glowing and gratified feelings.

"The tie between pastor and flock," said he, "is in some cases as delightful, as it is in all interesting and important."

"It may be important, but it is very often any thing but delightful," observed Frances: — "for instance, in a parish in my immediate neighbourhood, there are such bickerings between the vicar and his parishioners, — such litigious doings, — such grasping on the one side, and grudging on the other!"

"There can scarcely be a more revolting spectacle, than a clergyman and his parishioners in hostile array against each other," observed

Gerard: — "I have now and then seen a parish in which this has been the case, — in which, 'like the Athletæ in the contest of the Restis,' the parties were united only by the bond of strife; and each was twisting with all his might, at his own end of the rope, that the other might be forced to quit his hold; — the interests of Christianity are certainly sacrificed in such contests."

"Well, I hope these instances are rare," said Mrs. Grenville, "and that in a few years they will have entirely ceased."

"You are remarkably prone to hope, Mrs. Grenville," returned Frances; "but I am afraid human nature will be found the same to the end of the chapter."

"No," replied Mrs. Grenville, with a smile, "I think that the hope is warranted by the signs of the times: — there is a spirit of intelligent activity, judicious zeal, and real devotedness pervading the Church, that promises golden times."

"Well — I fancy that you and I are not likely to see these charming visions realised," said Frances. — "I happen to be acquainted with several specimens of racing, fox-hunting

parsons, differing from their brother squires only in wearing a surplice and gown on a Sunday, who must be swept off before this revival of the golden age!"

"I thought that the race of fox-hunting divines was almost extinct," said Constance, "and that it would be difficult now to find a person like the clergyman in Dr. Moore's 'Edward,' whose passion for hunting and shooting decided him to enter the Church."

"My experience has been very limited," observed Gerard, "but its result inclines me to hope, with Mrs. Grenville, that clerical duties are, generally speaking, well understood, and diligently fulfilled in this day; — indeed, that any one of common sense and reflection can lightly take upon him such an office is to me a mystery, — the responsibility appears so awful, — sometimes so overwhelming."

An expression of deep and touching feeling stole over the features of Gerard as he spoke, and a pause of some minutes succeeded.

"There is no such thing as a medium in this world," resumed Frances: — "opposed to the fox-hunting tribe stand the 'over good,' and 'over righteous;' a party who take up such

stiff puritanical notions, and make such a parade of their saintship, that people take refuge in the world to get out of their way."

"But amidst this conflict of human opinions," observed Gerard, "we have a sure guide in the Word of God. — I think if it be carefully studied, it will define the barrier which a Christian may not pass, and reveal the inscription, 'Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther.'"

"I do not know, indeed," returned Frances: "people draw very different inferences from the same premises."

"Why, yes, there are, as Locke says, some men of one, some of two syllogisms, and no more; and others who can advance but one step further: — these cannot always discern on which side the strongest proof lies," said Gerard: — "the mind may be distorted by prejudice, or warped by inclination, and may arrive at a wrong conclusion; but I think, in this enquiry, it is of chief importance that we really intend to ascertain the truth, and to be guided by it when ascertained."

"With respect to conformity with the world, — the great stumbling-block between the two

parties," replied Frances,—"we cannot legislate for other people, — they must judge for themselves: — to their own Master they must stand or fall."

"No, it is sufficient that we legislate for ourselves," returned Gerard; "or rather that we refer simply and conscientiously to Scripture as the rule of our own individual practice: — I know of no safer guide."

"If recreation be confessedly allowable and necessary, we may be permitted to decide for ourselves as to quality and quantity," observed Frances.

"Very true," returned Gerard; — "but I think it is here that the purifying, regulating spirit of true religion discovers itself: — without affectation or scrupulosity, a Christian will take care that his recreations shall be unimpeachable in their nature, and moderate in degree."

"But some persons contract the circle of recreations into such very narrow limits: — is Mr. Gerard Mortimer one of these?" enquired Constance.

"I presume not to dictate," replied Gerard: — "the line of my own duty of a clergyman appears to me extremely clear and dis-

tinct: — the devotedness such a profession requires is, I think, incompatible with many pursuits and indulgences which are perhaps harmless as it respects others."

"Decidedly an *ultra*, my dear, I fancy," said cousin Frances, as leaning on the arm of Constance she followed Mrs. Grenville and Gerard into the dining-room: — "quite one of your strait-laced gentlemen, I have a notion: — now, generally speaking, I have a great dislike to those young sprigs of divinity, who think it their duty to tutor all the world."

But Gerard Mortimer did not think it his duty to tutor all the world: — the honest confession of his sentiments and opinions was as distinct as possible from dictation and dogmatism: — it was frank and uncompromising, but perfectly unassuming: — his easy good breeding, and the happy variety of his conversation, at once gratified the taste, and exercised the mind.

Cousin Frances was somewhat provoked, that the tone and style of his conversation did not confirm the opinion she had hazarded. — The ill humour excited by the adventures of the preceding evening had by no means sub-

sided: — the storm had passed away, but the wave still remained turbid and ruffled; and any thing that could have warranted sarcasm or censure would have been a species of relief to her irritable feelings. — In such a state of things, Frances was extremely apt to be afflicted with a head-ache: — guiltless as her nerves and physical frame were, of being even accessaries on these occasions, they were always condemned as sole delinquents; — and by this convenient arrangement a claim was established on the sympathy of her friends. — Constance was generally resolutely silent at these moments: — she had not a word of commiseration to bestow; but Mrs. Grenville knew that the irritability which felt that it had attracted an observant eye, and contemptuous smile, was often quickened into exasperation; and she had always some good-natured palliative to suggest, or some favourite prescription to recommend. — Frances, in this instance, prescribed for herself; and begged to be left in undisturbed possession of her own room during the evening.

Her decision was submitted to with resignation by the rest of the party: — and the tone in which Constance proposed a walk, discovered her full share in this laudable feeling.

CHAP. XXXII.

" And not in vain, voluptuous even-tide,
Thy dappled clouds along th' horizon glide;
For, oh! while heaven and earth grow dumb with bliss,
In homage to an hour divine as this,
Thoughts of immortal beauty spring to birth,
And waft the soul beyond the dreams of earth."

R. MONTGOMERY.

IT was one of those still, soft summer evenings, in which the harmony of nature seems to lend its sweet influence to the mind; and no dissonance of taste prevented the unfettered expression of every thought and feeling as it arose.

" Our enjoyment of twilight need not be a prohibited subject this evening," said Constance: " we may confess it without fear of contempt or rebuke."

" At any rate, we share the feeling with minds of the highest order," said Gerard. — " How many sweet passages from our best poets crowd in a moment on the memory, in all their truth and reality!"

"Yes, — it is this fidelity which invests them with such an unfading charm," observed Mrs. Grenville. — "Hackneyed and familiar as are the descriptive lines of Milton, Collins, and Gray, such is their indestructible beauty, that they still regale and delight the mind."

"Yes; and there is a freshness in the descriptions of the poets of the day," said Constance, "that is to me quite marvellous: — we might expect, if the evening hour did inspire them, that their song would be like that of nature's own choristers, — only the same strain by new performers; yet how sweet and varied is the lay they pour forth."

"If climate has any influence over the mind, we must not complain of ours," said Mrs. Grenville; — "for what country is more rich in exquisite poets than our own? — Where do we find minds more completely attuned to the harmony and beauty of nature? — Where more nice observers of all her delicate graces?"

"Yes; our poets are not content with copying even her best and loveliest portraits," said Gerard; — "they seek her themselves in her green abodes, and lonely haunts, — in the beautiful glades of the forest, on the wild heath, and

in the tangled dell: — there is a charm in our descriptive poetry, — a reality, which I find in that of no other nation."

"If it be true, that the poetry of every nation takes a tinge from its climate," observed Constance, "we need not wonder that the lay of the British muse should be so infinitely varied: — it seems to have caught every hue of our changeful skies! — the brilliant, the tender, the impassioned, the delicate, we number in our list of poets! — Burns, Scott, Moore, Byron, Campbell! Oh! I cannot count our treasures!"

"And how sweet and rich are the emotions which poetry either kindles or reveals!" said Gerard: — "many a feeling lies buried in the heart till some chord is struck by a master's hand, which awakens kindred tones."

"I am glad you do not think it a waste of time and of life to listen to such sweet minstrelsy!" said Constance.

"No, — it is not a waste of time to listen to the sweet warblings of the nightingale, cheering the ear of night with her delicious music," observed Gerard; "and the melodies of the poet regale the mind and heart, just as the ravishing strains of 'nature's best skilled musi-

cian' regale the ear: — none but a cynic would turn sullenly away from the charmed lay of either: — but then I think it should be the poet's purpose to awaken the generous and ennobling sympathies of our nature, — to quicken its best feelings, not only to multiply, but to refine our pleasures. — If by the magic of his genius he betrays us into a sympathy with the feverish passions and corrupt feelings of a diseased mind, he is then mischievous, even though he strike the harp with a master's hand, and with a prophet's fire!"

"Yes," added Mrs. Grenville, "the poet should cull from the garden of nature only those sweet flowers that diffuse a healthful fragrance: — no poisonous weed, however brilliant its hue, however delicious its perfume, should mingle in the wreath he weaves."

"But may we not admire the general effect of the wreath, and look a little while at the beautiful weed, without fear of injury from its deleterious properties?" enquired Constance.

"I think it will be found a hazardous experiment," observed Gerard: — "no splendour of imagery, no glow of description, ought to bribe us, for one moment, into the endurance

of sentiments, which serve but to throw a lustre round vice and impurity: — if the honied sweetness of the poet beguile us into such toleration, the moral taste will be in time sullied and weakened; and the imagination, with all its glorious capabilities, had better starve, than the heart become perverted."

"Perverted — is a strong term," said Constance.

"It is," rejoined he; — "but I know not how to soften it. — I am sure that the richest intellectual gratification is dearly purchased by the smallest risk of moral contamination."

"But we do not depend on the poet for lessons of faith and practice," said Constance, after a pause. — "We do not consult him as a moral or religious teacher, but as an intellectual, imaginative being, who can throw open the elysium of fancy, and display to us new worlds of thought and feelings."

"But a great poet, my dear Miss Grenville, is necessarily a moral teacher: — he produces a powerful effect upon the heart and mind, and this effect must be either good or bad: — he is, therefore, peculiarly liable to the censures

reserved for those who turn the means of improvement to the purposes of corruption."

"If we put our judgment quietly to sleep, when we open the pages of such poets, I should adopt your opinion," returned Constance: — "but surely the dark and the golden thread may be distinguished in the poetic web; — may we not therefore extract the gold, and enrich ourselves without injury?"

"It is possible," observed Mrs. Grenville, "that persons of fixed principles, and strong discriminating intellect, may be able to do this; but as it respects the young, so open to vivid impressions, — so likely to have the mental eye dazzled, and the moral perceptions confused, — I think you will see, that Mr. Gerard Mortimer's caution is right."

"Ah! but I do not wish to see that he is right," exclaimed Constance, with playful perverseness. — "I love to range at liberty through the world of literature, and am willing to incur the mighty risk! — Are you very much shocked?" added she, looking up to him with a smile.

"It is not for me to play the part of Mentor," returned he: "but, perhaps, if your

own Mr. Mortimer were here at this moment, that frown might be seen which keeps you in such good order."

"Do you really think so?" enquired Constance; — "and must I try for the future to be content with those very dull sons of Parnassus — poets moral and didactic?"

"No, no," replied Gerard laughing: "the range we can take in the lovely land of Song, even with all the restrictions that may be expedient, is by no means so limited. — You may take a trip to Fairyland with Ariel, and visit the mermaids in their coral caves with Sabrina; — you may muse by haunted spring, and wander in the green wood with 'bonnie Kilmeny;' and listen to the wild huntsman's horn at the midnight hour in the deep forest: — it is not the play of imagination, — the sportiveness of fancy, or the witchery of romance, — with which we quarrel. — I think, too, we find, that in poets of the very highest order, such as Shakspeare and Milton, imagination, however excursive and powerful, is subordinate to reason, and controlled by judgment; and thus, amidst all the raptures of poetic inspiration, they never lose sight of truth and nature: — this gives justness

to their sentiments, as well as vigour and vividness to their conceptions and characters. — It is against the exceptions to this rule that we presume to guard you; against those who would trample down morality by the power of genius, and dazzle and mislead the understanding by the rare splendour of their intellectual powers."

"Pity it is, that any such should mingle among those master spirits, who reign and rule in that lovely land, and claim our delighted homage!" exclaimed Constance: — "pity that they should bind us by their witching spells; — for it can only be those who combine vigour of imagination with the tenderness of sensibility, — those who pour forth spontaneously the language of passion and fancy, — that exercise any very powerful control over the mind."

"No; tasteful imagery and melodious arrangement please the fancy, but leave the heart untouched," said Gerard.

"Still they are worth something," observed Mrs. Grenville: — "the flower which we gather that we may inhale its fragrance for a moment, and then fling carelessly away, adds, at least, to the enjoyment of that moment."

"Yes," replied Gerard, "we like the pretty weeds that spring up by the way-side to gladden the eye of the traveller, — though if we gather them into a bouquet they fade and are worthless."

"I rejoice that with all your scruples and cautions you are still so tolerant," said Constance; "for it is not on such an evening as this, and while that lovely star is beaming in splendour, that we can be reasoned out of our love of immortal verse! — Oh! how beautiful is this world, as seen through the prism of poetry: — a radiance is thrown over every object, — the stream and fountain sparkle with rainbow hues, — the daisy that we tread beneath our feet, — the gentle air that steals by us at this moment, — those stars, which are the poetry of Heaven! — with what a charm has it invested them! — The world thus contemplated seems a bright little isle of rest and beauty!"

"Do not, for a moment, imagine, that I would rob you of one half-hour's pure and healthful enjoyment!" exclaimed Gerard — "of that mental luxury in which you so much delight; — do not do me the injustice to believe that I resemble those 'bigots of the iron time,

who called the bard and minstrel's art a crime.' All that embellishes the mind — all that can throw a charm and glow over human life — is beautiful in its season; — but if moral and spiritual improvement be really the great purpose and end for which we live, any thing that may counteract this purpose, or defeat this end, must be vigilantly guarded against; — nor must we be bribed into forgetfulness of this object, even by strains and numbers so sweet, that they

> " ' Take the prisoned soul,
> And lap it in Elysium.' "

" You do not think, then, the cultivation of taste and imagination unfriendly to the growth of piety," said Constance.

" Far from it," replied Gerard; — " I would have every faculty that God has graciously bestowed on man freely and fully cultivated; — but taste and imagination must be held in subordination to reason, — and reason, in her turn, enlightened and controlled by Revelation. When a fine intellect and rich imagination are purified and chastised by Christian principle, the character is seen in all its symmetry and

proportion, and attains its full measure of beauty and usefulness."

"Ah! but such a union is so rare!" exclaimed Constance: — "either we have the piety without the taste, or the taste without the piety, or imagination without either, — or we have that dull class who eat, and drink, and sleep, and call it living. Now some very good, serious people are so insufferable."

Gerard shook his head. — "I must summon my father, I see, as soon as possible, if only for your sake," said he, as he prepared to take his leave.

"By all means," returned she, laughing; — "but as you are his deputy for the time being, you are quite at liberty, while dressed in a little brief authority, to use it for my advantage."

"And you will not frown me away if I avail myself of this permission?"

"Try the experiment," said Constance with a smile: — "if it be a fault to call things by their right names, help me to correct it."

Gerard made his parting bow, and found himself, long after he had been seated at the Rectory, still musing over the tastes, opinions, feelings, and faults of Constance. — Now when-

ever a young man of high principle, taste, and refinement, dwells with sufficient interest upon the faults of a young lady's character to wish to correct them, it may always be considered a suspicious symptom.

"She is a charming creature!" exclaimed he, as he paced up and down his study:—"but there are some specks that dim the brightness of the jewel:—if they were removed, it would be matchless!"—and he felt some anxiety to begin the interesting work.

CHAP. XXXIII.

" And then its hue!
Who ever saw so fine a blue?
Hold there, the other quick replies,
'Tis green; I saw it with these eyes.
I've seen it, sir, as well as you,
And must again affirm it blue." MERRICK.

THE plans of cousin Frances were so entirely influenced by the humour of the moment, that they were exceedingly subject to sudden changes: — from the general tenour of her conversation, Mrs. Grenville had been prepared for a lengthened visit, when her intention of leaving Elton immediately was abruptly announced. In vain her kind hostess, in the spirit of courteous hospitality, begged her to reconsider the matter. Decision sat on the brow of Frances: — she had already written to summon her companion, Miss Monson, from the holyday she was enjoying with her friends; and had requested her to

repair forthwith to Elton, that their journey homeward might take place without delay.

Mrs. Grenville immediately included Miss Monson in her renewed invitation; but Frances had a notion that decided negatives indicated strength of character: — she had full confidence in the wisdom of that aphorism, "Most men are slaves because they cannot say the monosyllable *No*,"— and her negative was final.

The difficulty of meeting with a suitable companion had been, for many a year, a standing grievance with Mrs. Egerton: — like the necessity of parliamentary reform and retrenchment, it furnished an inexhaustible theme for lamentation and eloquence: — the grave and the gay, the old and the young, the wise and the ignorant, had been tried in succession; but had this companion combined every virtue under heaven, it would have been no passport to the favour of Frances. When her mind was perturbed, and her temper ruffled, the equanimity of some had been felt as a reproof, and the irritability of others resented as an injury: — some fatigued her to death with their dulness, others wore her to death with their gaiety; one was too proud, another too humble; one was pro-

nounced incapable of sympathy, another made a parade of her feelings and attachment.

Frances was liberal as the day, generous even to profusion: — she frequently conferred the most substantial benefits on her friends and acquaintance; and they were thus placed in the perplexing predicament of feeling a claim on their gratitude, when there could be none on their affections.

Miss Monson, who, at present, held the enviable post of companion, was a timid, pliant, harmless person; an orphan, who had learned, in her buffetings with the world, to value the shelter of a home, even where cousin Frances presided. Miss Monson's assiduity to please was unconquerable: — nothing could be more exemplary than her patience; — yet Frances was not satisfied: — contradiction was impertinent, and acquiescence servile: — the monotony of an echo was not to her taste; and, after all, every body should have an opinion of their own. How far such sturdiness of mind would have suited her, is certainly questionable: — there were moments when a shadow of opposition was an unpardonable offence.

During a drive the day before she left the

Priory, Frances had purchased a ribband, which, under the cover of a dusky sky, and a darkened window, she had fancied a French grey, — but morning and sunshine discovered it to be a sky-blue. Now it suited her still to consider it a French grey, as she intended to have a hat trimmed immediately; and a *little* wish — a desire about nothing — was precisely what she never sacrificed.

"How do you like this colour?" said she to Mrs. Grenville: — "it is rather a deep grey:— will it look well?"

"It is very pretty," replied Mrs. Grenville; "but I call it blue."

"Blue!" echoed Frances: "no,— a darkish grey, if you please."

"Grey!" exclaimed Constance, in her turn: "it is, I think, as decided a blue as I ever saw."

"I never wear blue, and I intend to wear this, — so that settles the matter," said cousin Frances, in her most dogmatical manner.

"It will look very well, however," observed Mrs. Grenville.

"Yes, — but you will never persuade any body to call it grey," persisted Constance. "What do you say, Miss Monson?"

Miss Monson was caught in the horns of a dilemma; the evidence of her senses, however, was but too clear; and the example of Mrs. Grenville and Constance giving her some courage, she ventured to say it was *bluish*.

"Miss Monson, of course, coincides with the majority," said Frances, in a contemptuous tone; and murmuring something about her detestation of servility, she left the room. Miss Monson, silent, meek, and frightened, soon followed.

"I will waste no more compassion on that young lady," said Constance, as the door closed: — "a person who could be guilty of that *ish*, deserves even to live with cousin Frances."

"Poor thing! she is homeless, and motherless," said Mrs. Grenville, "therefore we must ry to forgive her even the *ish*."

"Yes, — my compassion for her has hitherto been very lively; but I confess, I shall be heartily glad when they are both safe at Fairfield. — 'The blest to-morrow! cheering, kind to-morrow! I were a heathen not to worship thee?'" added Constance, laughing.

The blest to-morrow arrived! and saw the imperials and packages arranged, and cousin

Frances and Miss Monson safe in the carriage. — The postilion cracked his whip : — John and Powell settled themselves on the dicky. — Fido barked. — Frances waved her hand, and Constance, turning to her mother, exclaimed, " How delightful ! the dear Priory now looks like itself again ! "

CHAP. XXXIV.

" Alone ! poor gentleman ! pray send him a card ! "

" By Greta's side, in evening grey,
To steal upon Matilda's way,
Striving, with fond hypocrisy,
For careless step and vacant eye ;
Calming each anxious look and glance,
To give the meeting all to chance,
Or framing, as a fair excuse,
The book, the pencil, or the muse ;
Something to give, to sing, to say,
Some modern tale, some ancient lay."

ROKEBY.

WHEN the news of Mr. Mortimer's absence made its way through the Elton world nothing could be more universal than the sympathy awakened for the young curate : — every body took it to heart ; — every body felt anxious to soften his cruel destiny ;—and invitations general and particular poured in. — Mrs. Courtland, with characteristic hospitality, called at the rectory, to insist upon Gerard's dining with her every day till Mr. Mortimer's return, — to prove that it would be the greatest possible treat to her, — and to assure him, that she considered

this arrangement quite a settled thing; — and she absolutely coloured with vexation and disappointment, when, with many expressions of grateful feeling, he hinted the possibility of interfering claims and engagements.

There was no stemming the spring-tide of civility that flowed in upon him: — he was compelled to float down the current — to dine with the dining world — to take coffee successively with Mrs. Bentley, Somers, Murray, Jones, &c.; and Gerard went through it all, with the desperate patience of one who sees his fate, and knows it to be inevitable. — It was curious to listen to the various opinions expressed by the community, after thus exercising their compassion towards this desolate young divine.

Mrs. Courtland pronounced him to be superior — very superior; — but rather too good for her: — he was a most excellent person! — so excellent, that she really did not feel good enough for him, — not that she could accuse him of any stiffness — no, the fault was in herself.

Jessy Twyford thought him highly interesting! of a charming poetical temperament —

certainly slightly tinged with methodism : — his religion was of a sturdy, uncompromising character : — this would have been highly objectionable in a *lay* acquaintance, — but in a *clerical* one it might be considered professional, and so got over.

Miss Musgrave described him as a promising young man — certainly not yet a decided character; but she hoped in a growing state !

An evening of hard listening secured him the suffrages of Mrs. Somers : — she thought him vastly agreeable ! — indeed, she had never known a Mortimer who was not so. — Her grandmother had been intimate with the Mortimers from her childhood, and she had always said, that agreeableness was a sort of heir-loom in the family.

Upon the whole, as far as opinions could be collected, Gerard had made a favourable impression ; — the proportion of *ifs* and *buts* was, perhaps, rather less than is usual in these cases.

After the duties of civility had been gone through, its pleasures were to be enjoyed. — Gerard's visits at the Manor House were pleasant refreshments to his spirit : — there he found the charm of polished manners and cultivated

minds; — but those at the Priory were the *bonne-bouche* he most enjoyed; for there to courtesy and culture were superadded all the grace and charm of heartfelt piety. — A general harmony of taste prevailed; — and the slight differences, or rather shades, of their sentiments and opinions were just sufficient to quicken the interest of conversation, and give it additional zest.

As the mind of Constance unfolded in the confidence of increasing intimacy, Gerard became insensibly and deeply interested, — some spell seemed to draw his steps to the Priory; and there he lingered during the long summer evenings, unconscious of the flight of time, — alive only to that sense of enjoyment which shed a new and delicious charm over his life. — He had hitherto been too studious, or too busy, to devote much time to female society; — but from the tenderness of his nature he was little likely to withstand the witchery of its influence: — something of melancholy interest mingled in Mrs. Grenville's feelings towards Gerard: — she had rarely met with a character more completely to her taste; — but the hectic glow which sometimes lighted up his fine countenance, and

the languor that stole over his frame after exertion, told a tale which filled her heart with forebodings: — she had imparted her fears to Constance; and they helped to give a very peculiar character to the feeling inspired by Gerard Mortimer. — It was wholly distinct from love, — and yet a pitying sort of tenderness mingled in the sentiment of admiration and respect which he excited, and invested her manner towards him with a resistless charm. — She contemplated him rather as a being of another world, — as one who would, in a few short years, mingle with pure, holy, and happy spirits, — than as a person whose heart could feel the conflict of human passions, or be won by mortal loveliness. — She listened to his conversation with undisguised pleasure, and to his opinions with the most winning deference: — they generally convinced her understanding, and satisfied her taste; — and sometimes when his animated and impressive eloquence as a Christian pastor had awakened the energies of her piety, and quickened the convictions of conscience, she would express her feelings and thanks, with all the fervour and sincerity which belonged to her temperament and character. — She

knew not the thrill of interest with which these feelings were watched, — the gush of tender emotion which filled his heart, as he listened to her animated language; — nor, in truth, did he reflect much upon the nature and extent of his own feelings: — to enjoy her society, to be considered as her friend and Mentor, was at present luxury enough, — he aspired to no other privilege.

Mrs. Grenville, perhaps, felt less at her ease than either of the young people. — Gerard was precisely the man to whom she would have intrusted her daughter with unhesitating confidence, had not her fears respecting his health presented a forcible objection: — yet coldly to check the intercourse, before any expression or disclosure of his sentiments warranted such interference, — to repress his delightful confidence in her hospitality and kindness, — this was not in her nature: — she could have frowned away a gay rich lover without difficulty; — but not to welcome Gerard with her own sweet smile, — Gerard, who commanded her respect, and awakened her sympathy, was impossible: — the kindliness of her nature interfered; — her presentiment that consumption had already begun its in-

sidious work excited towards him something of that indulgent feeling, which induces a fond parent to foster a delicate child with more than common tenderness; — which induces her to say, — " Puisque le jour peut lui manquer, laissons le un peu jouir de l'aurore." — She could not bear to cloud, by apparent unkindness, the morning of a life which she feared would be brief as it was beautiful!

These fears, however, travelled not beyond the Priory, nor did any person in the neighbourhood appear to share them. — Gerard himself was perfectly free from apprehension; — and the energy and activity of his character, and the elasticity of his spirits, deceived those with whom he did not come into immediate and daily contact: — he was considered a very effective substitute even for their favourite Mr. Mortimer. — The old ladies liked him nearly as well as his father: — the young ones, thought " truths divine came mended from his tongue." — His taste for music and painting won him favour with the latter class. — Handel, Mozart, and Haydn were not wasted on him: — he did not hear them with the dull ear of listless indifference, or ill-disguised weariness; but with a

kindling look of real enjoyment, which indicated natural and cultivated taste. — The young ladies thought him quite worth playing to: — and now and then, he would criticise their drawings; not with the superciliousness of connoisseurship, but good naturedly: kindly, he would point out a fault in perspective, or give judicious advice as to lights, shadows, and distances. — All this he found particularly pleasant, when Constance claimed his assistance: — to sit by her drawing-desk, and watch the progress of her pencil — to drop the book he held in his hand, and fix on her a long, fond gaze, — withdrawn the moment she looked up, — to listen to the delicious harmony of her voice, warbling the sweet old Scotch and Irish melodies, or pouring forth a rich volume of sacred song; — these were very dear and beguiling occupations; — and still more delightful was it, now and then, to rectify an opinion, to correct an error; to see the sweet blush of conviction steal over her check, and to hear the frank avowal of this conviction made with grateful emotion.

Sir Henry Lennox had been absent after the first fortnight of Gerard's introduction: — the

severe illness of his most intimate friend, — a friend dear as a brother, — had called him to a distant part of England: — he went with a reluctance for which he reproached himself; but his friend was now convalescent; and Sir Henry returned to look and love, to watch and to be miserable. — The tone and manner of Constance towards himself and Gerard Mortimer were not only distinct but contrasted: — while he was tolerated, Gerard was approved; — he was heard, — Gerard was listened to; — he was received as the guest of the family, — Gerard was welcomed with cordiality as her own personal friend.

Now neither the absence nor the return of Sir Henry had been viewed with indifference by Constance; — not even the recollection of Edward's hopes and exhortations; the unpleasant certainty, — the distressing fact, — that Sir Henry was a baronet, with ten thousand per annum; that he was sought, courted, and distinguished, — could repress the glow of pleasure with which she heard his name again announced; — but the feeling was closely wrapt in her inmost heart; — and her manner was all cold respect, or languid indifference.

To Gerard, who was surrounded by no pride, or pomp, or circumstance, she freely gave her kindest smile, and lent her willing ear.

Sir Henry, however, did not desert his post of observation. — The suspicion that Gerard was dear to Constance was still *but* a suspicion; occasionally relieved by a gleam of hope, as to the possibility of its being altogether premature. — With a strange contrariety which is discoverable in that mighty maze, the human heart, this dreaded obstacle served but to deepen his feelings, and quicken his perception of the graces and charms of Constance. — That he had not vowed himself her knight before the arrival of Gerard, and while her heart was certainly disengaged, appeared to him now little less than insanity; and he began even to quarrel with the sensitiveness of his own pride, which had interposed to prevent the unqualified expression of his sentiments. — "The fair form of happiness" had perhaps "hovered round, intent to bless," and had been chased away by his own folly; — still, though under the influence of jealous feelings as it respected Gerard, they were free from the meanness and littleness

which so often accompany such feelings: — he used none of the little depreciating arts to which jealousy is prone; did full justice to the character and attainments of Gerard; magnanimously expressed his admiration; and though he devoutly wished that he had remained to watch over the flock which he had for a time so carefully tended, yet he would not for a moment allow his fears and feelings to interfere with the gentlemanly courtesy which he felt to be due to Gerard; — the young men were therefore thrown much into each other's society, both at the Manor House and the Priory; and Constance had frequent opportunities of comparing their sentiments and characters, disclosed in the play of animated conversation, and friendly intercourse: — the minds were certainly kindred; the same high tone of moral feeling, — the same vivid enjoyment of intellectual pursuits, — the same delicacy of taste, and intenseness of feeling, — were apparent in each; but in Gerard all this was tempered, regulated, and controlled by religious principle, which threw a more subdued tint over the whole mind.

Sir Henry was not destitute of religious feeling, but his piety at present was rather decor-

ous than heartfelt: — he acknowledged the propriety, utility, and expediency of religious institutions, and gave them his cordial support; but he was preserved from the seductions of vice rather by refinement of taste, — by a chivalrous sense of honour, — by a high feeling of self-respect, — than by the restraint of religious principle. — He had abundance of that honour which Rochefoucault has called "the good sense of pride," still it was but a modification of pride. — "Honour, indeed, is a well-cut jewel, which exhibits different dyes, all beautiful, in different positions; but religion is the sun which gives every one of them its colour and radiance."

Constance felt that there were subjects on which she could pour forth her thoughts to Gerard which would have been strange to the ear of Sir Henry; and yet (who can reason upon the freaks of human nature?) Sir Henry had captivated her imagination; he occupied her thoughts, and lived in her heart: — that mysterious sympathy which links heart to heart, and mind to mind, had been awakened in her bosom; and the "charmed heart" was safe from all other spells. — Perhaps there was something in the loftiness of his nature akin to her own,

— a congeniality which discovered itself even in their faults and mistakes. She often felt reproved by the unbending correctness of Gerard's opinions, the almost saintly purity of his motives and feelings: — she thought of Gerard as a model of "man as he should be," — of Sir Henry, as an attractive specimen of "man as he is." — Yet Constance was by no means aware of her danger: — she knew not that the heart, which had hitherto been so light and free, was now entangled by Love's witcheries; or if a moment's consciousness that Sir Henry was increasingly agreeable to her was occasionally awakened, it served only to render her manner towards him more chilling and distant. — As far as he was concerned, he fancied that she might be apostrophised as "the maid with bosom cold."

Gerard seemed to hover about her almost instinctively. — In his character of pastor of the parish *pro tempore*, there were many subjects of mutual interest; the parish was *terra incognita* to him; — and questions concerning the character and wants of his poor neighbours could no where be better resolved than at the Priory. — There was also much of that plea-

sant and playful discussion, which takes place between persons conscious of each other's powers, and desirous of bringing them into exercise: — there was some interesting question to be resolved, — some subject of elegant criticism to be canvassed, — some comparison between rival literary favourites to be instituted; — exquisite passages were to be compared, — delightful sentiments to be enjoyed.

In all this, Sir Henry occasionally bore his part: — he had decided upon the course of conduct to be pursued, if his worst fears were realised; and the generosity of his purposes, in some degree sustained him amidst the conflict of contending hopes and fears.

CHAP. XXXV.

" The olden time! aye, the olden time!
Though wild the fable, though rude the rhyme,
O dear is a tale of the olden time,
Those days of marvel and mystery,
Those times we never again may see;
When life was a wild and a gorgeous dream,
A meteor glancing with fitful beam;
When the knight pricked forth with his lance in rest,
To far distant lands at his lady's behest;
When the Templar rush'd to the Holy Land;
When the Troubadour wander'd with harp in hand;
When the rosy garland of gay Provence
Breath'd bloomingly round the warrior's lance."

LONDON IN THE OLDEN TIME.

SIR HENRY LENNOX devoted part of his leisure to improving the estate, and enlarging the mansion-house of his ancestors: a new wing was projected, which connoisseurs pronounced to be in excellent taste, and many changes in the interior arrangements took place, — the paintings were all newly disposed. — The grim warrior who had so quietly rested on his sword in the same spot for nearly a century, made way for a young falconer, with hawk

and hound, who had been hidden in an obscure nook for the same space of time; while the lady, arrayed in stiff brocade, who had so long cheered them with her perpetual smile, from the opposite side of the gallery, was transported to a distant compartment, and placed in a new light. — The old housekeeper lifted up her hands and eyes in astonishment, and thought these transpositions ominous and unnatural.

The series of family portraits, though placed in excellent order, was pronounced to be incomplete. Lady Lennox petitioned for those of her three children; and they, in their turn, insisted that hers should be included in the groupe.

The young artist whom Sir Henry employed to execute the picture objected to the present English costume: — it was quite as unpicturesque as the stiff coat and spreading hoop of former days. He was permitted to satisfy his own taste; and Sir Henry was represented in the character of a knight returning from the Holy Land; Percy as his squire; Lady Lennox, with her wimple, hood, and veil; and Caroline in the dress of a female pilgrim.

The picture was executed with much beauty and spirit: — the beaming eye and laughing glance of Percy, contrasted well with the faded beauty of Lady Lennox. The likenesses were all good; but that of Sir Henry was peculiarly happy: — he had thrown his plumed helmet on the long oaken table, as he hastened to receive his mother's welcome, — the pride of victory was in his step; yet the tender deference of filial affection seemed to blend with the triumphant animation of the moment.

"Congratulate me," said Lady Lennox, introducing Mrs. Grenville, Constance, and Gerard Mortimer to the painting: — "is it not a treasure?"

"It is, indeed, a most delightful picture," returned Mrs. Grenville, after a pause: — "it combines all that is valuable in a portrait with so much poetical interest."

"It is with a very singular feeling that we contemplate such a picture," said Constance, with her eyes rivetted on the group: — "the mind is completely thrown back, while the every-day sympathies of the heart are in their usual action."

" Yes, the imagination is regaled, while the feelings are gratified," said Gerard, — his eye rested on the noble countenance of Sir Henry : — " deeds of high emprise would accord well with that fine face, — it seems moulded by nature to express lofty purpose, and heroic achievement."

" On looking at it, we can scarcely help regretting that the days of chivalry are passed," observed Constance.

" It is a mighty fantastic affair altogether," said Mr. Herbert, who had joined the party : — " they wanted to mix me up in the picture, tricked out in the garb of a holy palmer."

" And had you the cruelty to refuse, sir?" said Constance : — " it would have made the scene so complete ! "

" Yes, yes ; — but I have no great taste for mummery and masquerading :— if any body wishes for my portrait, they must be content to take me as I am — an English gentleman of the nineteenth century, —

> " An honest man, close button'd to the chin,
> Broad cloth without, and a warm heart within."

" Well, my dear sir, at any rate we need not

regret, on your account, that the days of chivalry are past," said Gerard.

"Why no, indeed," replied Mr. Herbert; "and I fancy it will be very difficult to find any rational person who really does regret it. But you must not stand here while we discuss this nice point," continued he, giving his arm to Lady Lennox, and leading her to a sofa, near which the party assembled. — "The days of chivalry!" resumed he: — "it is a well sounding term, and conjures up a train of romantic associations; but why any sober-minded person should regret that such days are passed and gone, I am at a loss to discover."

"They were days of heroic purpose, and heroic achievement," replied Sir Henry, "when men would shed their heart's best blood in the cause of God, their country, and their liege lady."

"They were days, too, of self-denial and self-sacrifice," added Gerard, "and, therefore, not to be slandered."

"They were days when the glow of enthusiasm was in fashion," observed Constance: — "when to be brave and honourable was sufficient passport to distinction."

Mr. Herbert smiled good-humouredly at his youthful opponents. — "You look at these days through the vista of time, and the medium of poetry and romance," said he; "and nothing can be more fair than the vision thus presented. Now, I am thinking of them in their reality and detail, and the illusion is dissipated."

"I must confess," observed Gerard, "much as I delight in these recollections, that when I I consider the matter soberly — when I remember the flood of light that has since poured in, and the thousand objects of interest it has revealed, I cannot regret, though I may admire the beautiful haze of an earlier time."

"But we have nothing to do with their detail," said Constance: — "we have only to think of the fearless knight, and the faithful lover, — the splendour of the pageant, and the tournament; — and, oh, how delightful they are!"

"Depend upon it, my dear child," returned Mr. Herbert, "you, who can recline in your arm-chair, with your feet on the fender, reading Scott's picturings of these things, are far better off than the Lady Blanche, or Lady Rowena, who acted a part in them. What was woman at that period?"

"The creature whom man worshipped!" replied Sir Henry.

"Yes, — and her life was dull and monotonous as that of an enshrined idol," said Mr. Herbert.

"Why she could hunt, and hawk, and weave tapestry with her maidens, and listen to the song of the troubadour," said Sir Henry, smiling.

"And tell her beads, and do penance," added Mr. Herbert: — "but, pray, in what state was her mind? You, who all think intellectual cultivation so great a blessing, how can you panegyrise a state of society in which the mind was left a mere blank? In comparing two different periods, we must not look at the holyday pageant, but at every-day life. Now, in this vaunted age of chivalry, justice was imperfectly understood, and capriciously exercised; — liberty was unknown, superstition reigned and revelled: — it was an age without science, without literature, without books. Woman, if she was sometimes the object of the absurdest homage, was often the prey of lawless violence: — the noble, except when animated by the din of war, was dull and sensual — the yeoman coarse and vul-

gar — the peasant slavish and brutal. True, you had a certain frank hospitality; the pomp and prodigality, and the barbaric splendour of the tournament; — but even in the palace the royal apartments were strewed with rushes, — even in the palace were to be found squalid wretchedness and sordid penury. Now look at the refined comforts, the elegant accommodations, the diffused taste and literature of the present day, and tell me whether, amidst the polish and refinement of the nineteenth century, we are to regret the decline and fall of such a state of things?"

"I think we should not be quite content," said Gerard to Sir Henry, "to exchange our Homer and Virgil, our Theocritus and Anacreon, for a monkish legend; — nor would the ladies give up Scott and Byron, Metastasio and Ariosto, — the privilege of ranging and revelling amidst the treasures of the literary world, — to bend over their tapestry, or tell their beads."

"Nor would they wish," said Mrs. Grenville, "upon mature deliberation, to retrograde to that period when it was deemed necessary to admonish accomplished young ladies, being at table, 'to lean not, by any means, upon their

elbows — nor by ravenous gestures discover a voracious appetite; not to eat spoone meate so hot, that the tears should stand in their eyes:' — when they were told that 'to throw liquor down the throat, as into a funnel, was an action fitter for a juggler than a gentlewoman,' — and delicately reminded, that 'it would be very decent and comely to use a fork.' "

"Now really you are all too cruel," exclaimed Constance, when the laugh which succeeded this speech had subsided, "thus rudely to tear away the drapery with which imagination has invested the past."

"Dispose the folds of this drapery as gracefully and as ornamentally as you please," returned Mr. Herbert, "but let us have no cant about the age of chivalry."

"But when we regret that this age is passed," said Sir Henry, "we refer only to the class of feelings which were then in full action, — we regret that they are nearly extinct; that they have been succeeded by a political, commercial, calculating spirit; and that too many men of family and fortune have exchanged the hardy self-denying habits of the olden time for luxurious idleness."

"Class of feelings!" exclaimed Mr. Herbert, — "why, you do not mean to say, that because men are not tilting with every windmill in their way, for the love of the radiant eyes of their Dulcinea Del Tobosa, that patriotism, and courage, and love, are bygone things: — the class of feelings, by which a gentleman is now to illustrate his name, may be of a quieter character, — there may be less show, and noise, and bustle; — but there are as many roads to distinction, and more to usefulness open, — and whether a gentleman is to be obscure or prominent, — a cipher, a blessing, or a curse, to the land of his birth, — must depend upon himself."

"Well, — there appears to me to be far less manly disinterestedness, and much more luxurious selfishness, than in former times," observed Sir Henry.

"Why, it is not very possible to estimate the quantum of selfishness of any given period," said Mr. Herbert: — "the past we see through the softening mist of distance; but instances of coarse selfishness were probably more abundant than at present. — As to luxury, we do not

deny its paralysing effect; but then we must look at its counterbalancing advantages."

"Selfishness, in fact, ought to be decreasing, because we are now infinitely more familiar with the principle, which can alone counteract it," observed Gerard.

"Yes, I leave it to Mr. Gerard Mortimer, to talk of what has been gained on the score of morals and religion," said Mr. Herbert. — "I confine myself to the benefits arising from more enlightened government, and from the diffusion of science and taste; — and in this point of view, the sphere of enjoyment is incalculably enlarged; there are a thousand feelings, sympathies, and pleasures open to you, which were unknown to an earlier state of society; — which were not even guessed at by the tilting heroes of your imagination."

"May I hope, Miss Grenville, that you are inaccessible to the reasoning of these matter-of-fact persons?" said Sir Henry, — "may I flatter myself, that I still retain you as an ally?"

"Why, he that is convinced against his will," said Constance, with a smile, — "you know the *et cetera*. — I confess there does not appear to me to be much danger of an excess of

romance in the present day, — that does not seem to be a crying sin of the times."

"So much the better!" exclaimed Mr. Herbert, — "so much the better! — the more distinctly objects are seen the less likely we are to make erroneous estimates of their value. — Now the glamour of romance is very apt to dazzle and bewilder the mental eye."

The conversation was here interrupted by the entrance of a servant, — and soon after Mrs. Grenville took her leave.

CHAP. XXXVI.

" That wonderful passion, which to be defined is impossible, because no words can reach to the strange nature of it: they only know it who inwardly feel it — it is called Love!"

SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

TIME sped on deliciously with Gerard. — It was incredible: — but nearly six weeks had elapsed since his father had left home: — he became aware of this astonishing fact, on receiving a letter from Mr. Mortimer, announcing his return, — that Helen Seymour would accompany him, and rejoicing that the tedious term of his absence had at length expired. — A pang of self-reproach shot through the heart of Gerard, as he folded up this letter; — for the first time in his life that heart did not glow at the thought of a meeting with his father: — it was strange, too, that the expectation of a visit from Helen, his gay, lively, light-hearted cousin, should draw forth a sigh instead of a smile; — but his luxurious independence was

now at an end, — there was an end to his privileges as a solitary man; — true, the Priory would be still accessible, — but there would be no plea for such frequent visits, and the claims of home would be paramount. — A sudden cloud seemed to have dimmed the brightness of the scene: — again Gerard reproached himself; — it was ungrateful, it was unnatural: — he took a turn in the garden, to try if air and sunshine would charm away his unaccountable depression; — but there he caught a view of the Priory, peeping forth amidst the fine trees by which it was surrounded. — How many delightful hours had he passed under that roof! — how often had he strolled with Constance and Mrs. Grenville beneath the shade of those trees! — their summer beauty had passed away, and they were glowing with the tints of autumn; — but autumn was a melancholy season; — there was nothing of the gaiety of hope, — nothing of the brilliancy of joy, in the aspect of nature: — the rustling leaf and withered flower spoke of decay and desolation: — pensive thoughts and melancholy presages floated indistinctly through the mind of Gerard, and saddened his spirit: — he was no stranger,

however, to the duty of self-control; morbid self-indulgence formed no part of his system; and he began resolutely to analyse his feelings: — the secret was soon developed. — One fair vision haunted his dreams, — interrupted his studies, — mingled in his prayers; — one fair vision lent a delicious charm to the present, and gave to the future its glow and radiance. — Constance was dear to him as his own soul; — to tread the path of life with her, — to shield her from its storms, — to guide her feet into the way of peace! — There was ecstasy in the thought, — but it was the hope only of a moment. — Could he flatter himself that she would share his humble fortunes? — that she, who might grace the glittering ring of worldly splendour, would be content to dwell in the shade, and bloom only for him? — True, she was unambitious and disinterested: — but what had he to offer? — What were his expectations? — A very small inheritance from his father, and the vague hope of church-preferment at some distant day. — To win her affections under such circumstances would be cruel, if it were possible; — and yet, if it were possible! — There was rapture in the hope: — for a moment, a

deep flush mantled his cheek, and mounted to his brow: — but it was madness to indulge such a hope. — No, he would guard his secret from every eye; — he would gradually break off the intercourse so delicious, yet so fatal to his peace. — He must make shipwreck of his happiness; — but endure what he might, he would still acquit himself to his conscience. — Gerard walked on with a hurried step, in deep thought; — again the Priory caught his eye, and his heart thrilled with emotion. — Was the charm broken? Was the spell dissolved? Were the happy days he had there enjoyed for ever gone? — What if Constance were favourably disposed towards him? He thought of her manner; — certainly it was not discouraging; — she had, on several occasions, manifested the kindest anxiety for his health. — He believed that she was by no means indifferent to his good opinion; and now and then, when he had ventured to play the part of Mentor, there had been something exquisitely winning in the docility with which she had listened; — but this might all proceed from sweetness of disposition, — from the simplicity of a frank and open nature, — from the ease of a

heart perfectly disengaged: — he was not coxcomb enough to translate kindness into preference, or to draw inferences in his own favour from slight premises. — However, he would do nothing rashly, — nothing abruptly; — his visits to the Priory must not be discontinued; — he could devise no excuse for such apparent caprice; — but he would guard every look, — every word, — that his secret might not transpire. — Gerard continued to muse and meditate during the greater part of the day, and to indulge in that sort of vague reverie to which the mind is prone when the spirits are exhausted by conflicting feelings.

From this state he was roused at a late hour, by the sound of carriage-wheels, and was called upon to receive his father and Helen.

CHAP. XXXVII.

" A pleasant-spirited lady; there is little of the melancholy element in her; she is never sad but when she sleeps, and not even sad then — for I have heard say, she hath often dreamed of unhappiness, and waked herself with laughing."

SHAKSPEARE.

Two years had elapsed since Gerard had last seen his cousin; — she was unchanged, — the same lovely laughing girl; her spirits buoyant with excess of glee, — all was light and joy in her little world: it was gay with flowers, and bright with sunshine, — and life appeared to her a happy holyday, made for sport and revelry; her anticipations were all pleasant, and of reflection she knew nothing: — caressed and indulged by all the world, natural amiability and sweetness of disposition had preserved her from waywardness; and there was something pleasant and playful even in the self-will which she constantly exercised.

Helen was only two years old when her mother died.

" Oh! there is no fount of deep
Strong deathless love, save that within
A mother's heart."

Of that fount, Helen had scarcely tasted: she had never felt the gentle control of intelligent affection, the vigilant tenderness of maternal love. — Mr. Seymour, indeed, was fondly attached to his children, but he was engaged amid the turmoils and bickerings of a busy world. — In high practice as a barrister, he had little leisure, and that little he devoted to social and intellectual pleasures: — he delighted to collect around him a talented circle, and to feel his mind amused and stimulated. During their childhood, he generally fondled his little girls for half an hour in the day: — they climbed his knee, sported around him, twined their arms about his neck, and successfully coaxed him for any indulgence they desired: — to see them healthy and happy was all he wished.

As years passed away, his daughters were placed at a select school; whence they returned with the usual complement of information and attainment, to mingle in the gay circle of their father's home.

Miss Seymour had now been married two years; since which period, Helen had reigned sole mistress. — Her quick talents and lively mind were constantly excited and exercised in

the society by which she was encircled; — she was, indeed, a brilliant star in a region of light; but her position in society gave her an independence of manner, a certain self-possession, not often seen at her age.

Of religion, as a motive or principle, she knew nothing: — it was a subject to which Mr. Seymour never adverted; it seemed to form no part of his system. — On this account Mr. Mortimer had felt deep uneasiness at his sister's marriage. — To a worldly eye, indeed, it presented every possible advantage. — Mr. Seymour enjoyed the highest respect and consideration: he was a most indulgent husband, — and his house was the very temple of variety and pleasure. — Mr. Mortimer, however, did not contemplate objects solely through a worldly medium, and his estimate differed widely from the general one; nor could he even now, after the lapse of many years, think of his sister without a pang.

Occupied by his clerical duties, he had never been a frequent visitor at the house of Mr. Seymour; and after the death of his sister his intercourse with the family had been still more limited. —The urbanity of Mr. Seymour's man-

ners induced him always to receive Mr. Mortimer with cordiality; but there was a mutual consciousness of uncongeniality, which destroyed the charm of the intercourse.

Helen sported away her life without a single thought of the future; — no recollection of responsibility disturbed her enjoyment: — she went to church now and then, when it was convenient; and criticised the sermon and the preacher in the same light and lively strain that she would have criticised the French play, or the Opera.

Mr. Mortimer contemplated her with that deep and heartfelt interest which is felt for a near relative by those who take a serious view of the purposes of human life, of its immediate object and ultimate destination. — Brilliant and cloudless as was the morning of her life, days of darkness would too surely come; — and for these, how was she prepared?

Helen did not suspect the secret purpose for which Mr. Mortimer had beguiled her to the Rectory, — the lessons he hoped to instil, — the feelings he desired to awaken: — some love of her uncle, and still more the love of change, induced her to accept the invitation, and bid

farewell for a few weeks to the gay circle at home.

" Welcome, dear Helen, to my house and home !" said Mr. Mortimer, as she seated herself at the breakfast-table the morning after her arrival: — " here you are to preside queen and mistress, till you are tired of reigning."

" Charming news, indeed !" returned Helen; " but how can you be rash enough to give me such license; for what woman was ever tired of power? — Gerard, you witness my installation; remember, I expect from you fealty and honour due."

" What shall be my first act of homage," enquired Gerard: — " shall I ring for coffee, and stir the fire?"

" Yes; its blaze will be quite delightful, this chill autumnal morning: — the sparkle of a fire is one of the luxuries of autumn. — I am glad I live in merry England, where we can see the blaze, and feel the glow: — to live in a land of stoves to me would be a serious privation."

" A *serious privation*, would it?" said Mr. Mortimer, smiling.

" Oh, quite an affliction !" exclaimed Helen.

" Life has sped pleasantly with you, my dear child," observed Mr. Mortimer, patting her cheek, " if such are your afflictions."

" Yes, it has, indeed, very pleasantly," returned Helen; — " and I think it is chiefly owing to my own good management: — it is true, there are dull men, and dull things in the world; but I take care to have nothing to do with them. — ' Le supreme talent, est celui d'amuser; et le supreme bonheur, l'amusement!' — Oh, what a shake of the head, my own dear uncle! — it is eloquence itself!"

" I need not then translate it," said Mr. Mortimer.

" No, no, I will not trouble you; it is perfectly intelligible; but conviction, alas! does not follow; — indeed, it is a proposition I do not desire to see disproved," added she: — " so let me give you a cup of this delicious coffee, and I promise one of these days to listen to any thing you have to say in defence of dulness, — only to listen, you know."

" But you never will hear any thing from me in its defence," replied Mr. Mortimer: — " to be good and to be dull are very distinct things."

"And you think me neither the one nor the other," exclaimed Helen, laughing. — "I do not know whether to be grateful for so questionable a compliment."

"Are you inclined to think it one?" enquired Gerard.

"Why, I do not know," replied Helen; — "the word *good* is one of large meaning. — I have heard it applied to a vast variety of persons, whom I have not the smallest desire to emulate. — I have often heard the most stiff, dull, set up persons, whom it gives me a fit of yawning even to think of, canonized, forsooth, as very *good*. I can only say, that, like caviare and olives, they are a vast deal too good for me."

"Well, my love, I hope I shall have the pleasure of introducing you to some happier specimens of the same class," observed Mr. Mortimer.

"Thank you, my dear uncle: — do these happy specimens abound in your neighbourhood? — By-the-bye, Gerard, in this land of strangers, do be charitable enough to be my guide; and draw the portraits of those who will think it right to do homage to me as queen of

the rectory, *pro tempore.* — Whom shall I see first, do you think?"

"Probably our nearest neighbours, from the Priory," returned Gerard.

"And pray what are they like?" enquired Helen: — "are they modern or antique? gay or grave? young or old?"

"I have so little skill as an artist, that you had better not trust to my portraiture," said Gerard, with as much calmness as he could assume. — "You will see them most probably to-day or to-morrow, and you can judge for yourself."

"If *I* attempted to class them," observed Mr. Mortimer, "they would certainly be placed in that small division which contains the gems of my cabinet."

"Ah! but the tastes of sixty and of twenty-five do not always harmonise," replied Helen. — "Gerard may give a different account of the matter: — yes, yes, I see these Priory people are no favourites with him."

A smile stole over the countenance of Gerard, even amidst the embarrassment that for a minute chained his tongue.

"Not favourites!" exclaimed Mr. Mortimer, rather indignant at the apparent coldness of Gerard. — "I am sure the suspicion is a libel on his taste."

"Helen jumps to a conclusion, sir, with very lady-like rapidity," said Gerard, speaking with some effort: — "I do not think she has any logical data for such an inference."

"Ah! but a look — a manner — a pause — a half minute's silence — often reveals so much," said Helen.

"I can only say to-morrow you will judge for yourself," observed Gerard, calmly.

"Yes, and then we will compare notes," replied Helen. — "I wish to-morrow were come."

CHAP. XXXVIII.

" But, oh! there was a blooming boy,
Who often turn'd the pages o'er,
And wrote therein such words of joy,
As all who read still sigh'd for more!

And *Pleasure* was this spirit's name;
And though so soft his voice and look,
Yet Innocence, whene'er he came,
Would tremble for her spotless book."

MOORE.

TO-MORROW came and went; — and in a very few days Helen had received the compliments of the neighbourhood, and was on the very pleasantest terms imaginable with Mrs. Grenville and Constance. — In some long morning walks, and snug sociable evenings, they had discovered enough of each other's minds and manners to be mutually interested. — Gerard did not withdraw from these little coteries; but there was something of abstraction and constraint about his manner, that did not escape the notice and censure of his lively cousin.

"I think Gerard is exceedingly altered for the worse, in the two years that have passed since I saw him," said Helen to Constance, as they were preparing for a long stroll. — "I challenged him to walk with us this morning, and he muttered and murmured something about regret, and impossibility; and then turned off to his study, and his dingy folios. — Is he to be forgiven? — and such a morning as this, too!"

The morning was indeed beautiful. An early haze had just melted away, and all was clear, fresh, and brilliant; — the fading woods were rich in beauty, — the gossamer glittered on every spray, and nature seemed to rejoice in her own loveliness.

"I really believe," resumed Helen, still following the current of her own thoughts, "that he prefers old Barrow and South to any thing in the creation: — it is quite certain, at any rate, that he prefers them to you or to me, — discourteous knight that he is!"

"I know nothing of his taste as it respects his cousin Helen and myself," returned Constance: — "of course he stands convicted of an unpardonable deficiency, if he does not ad-

mire us; — but I am sure he is an enthusiastic lover of nature — of *her*, at least, he is a passionate admirer!"

"Facts are not to be disproved by asssertion, my dear Miss Grenville," replied Helen: — "did I not see him this very morning look at the glorious sun and the gorgeous woods with indifference? — did I not see him take down a frightful dusty folio, and begin reading with the most tasteless intentness? — he has really taken to be such a saint that he is quite intolerable: he had better get a skull-cap and ruff, and turn Puritan at once, — now a middle-aged saint is disagreeable enough; — but a young one!!"

"Is it the youth, or the saintship, that is so intolerable?" enquired Constance, laughing.

"Oh! it is the combination, — the unnatural combination," said Helen: — "grave looks, grave thoughts, and young hearts suit as little as those brown faded leaves would suit with the bright blossoms of spring."

"Ah! but as bright blossoms and bright hopes are sometimes blighted," returned Constance, — "may not grave thoughts have their turn now and then?"

" Why, to every thing there is a season : — you will not question the wisdom that pronounced that axiom," said Helen. — " I have a very particular private objection to all these young saints, they are so exhortatory. This morning, by way of surprising my excellent uncle, I gave a sort of abstract of my winter and spring campaign ; — talked of the Opera and Almacks, of masked balls and *fêtes champêtres*, till his hair, poor man, actually stood on end. He happened to be called away to a conference with his chosen friend, the old Scotch gardener : they are quite like Damon and Pythias ; — and Gerard thought proper to supply his loss, by entering a formal protest against my proceedings. I assure you his eloquence was surprising. I had some thoughts, for a minute, of turning nun, and counting my beads for the rest of my days : — if I really believed half he said, I should be frightened out of my wits. To do him justice, poor fellow, I think he has my reformation really at heart ; for he spoke with *beaucoup d'onction*, and seemed quite exhausted with his own energy of feeling. At the close of this oration, we were favoured with a call from Miss Musgrave : — if you had

but heard her descant and dilate upon the poor and the poor laws, and schools, infant, national, and adult: — I am sure it must be matter of constant regret to her, that she cannot energise sufficiently to be in twenty places at once; for she has not the smallest conception that any wheel in this world of ours can go round without a push from her skilful hand. I shall certainly recommend Gerard, as spiritual Quixote, to choose her for his Dulcinea."

"Well, — I do not think you do justice to your cousin, in confounding him with Miss Musgrave," said Constance: — "there is nothing the least dogmatical or obtrusive in the character of his piety."

"*Ergo*, that of the young lady is both, — that is the proper inference. You see what a turn I have for logic," returned Helen.

"Perhaps Miss Musgrave's manner does not do her justice; — but the piety of Mr. Gerard Mortimer is as humble as it is earnest," added Constance.

"Very prettily said, indeed, my dear," replied Helen: — "you, perhaps, with an eye habituated to all the delicate shades of this class, may discern differences which are discoverable

only to the initiated. Now, to me, every body who preaches, except in that regular, legitimate place, the pulpit, is extremely disagreeable; — and for this reason, — when we are snug in a pew we can use our own discretion as to listening, — if we like to take a ramble in the world of fancy, fiction, or memory, we can manage the matter; — but to be pounced upon in a parlour, appealed to in one's own proper person, called upon to confirm one's own sentence of condemnation, and made to look like a simpleton, and feel like a criminal, — this is, in my opinion, as great a solecism in good breeding as can well be imagined."

"I suppose," said Constance, "your cousin thought that desperate cases require desperate measures."

"Well, I hope he has acquitted his conscience, and given up my case as hopeless," said Helen: — "I told him it was a pity to throw away his pearls so lavishly; for that I had much rather be left to my own devices. Pray, does he ever think it his duty to play the part of lecturer to you?"

"I cannot call it lecturing," replied Con-

stance; — "but he expresses his sentiments very frankly on most subjects."

"And you receive it with all due deference, in the meek spirit of a disciple?" returned Helen.

"Why, he generally contrives to win the suffrages of my understanding and judgment," said Constance; — "and if we have a desire to do right, in such a case how can we resist?"

"Aye, but I very much prefer doing what is pleasant to doing what these very good people call right," replied Helen. — "Here in the country, indeed, among woods and groves, and bees and butterflies, and flowers, you may play the part of an innocent Pastorella, or of a Lady Bountiful, with a great deal of ease and grace; — you may read and meditate, and listen alternately to the hum of insects and the hum of school children; — you may amuse yourself with making broth for Widow Bell, and teaching Margery Two Shoes a, b, c; — but in our region there is really no time for these very proper occupations. Besides, I have a great notion, if I pursued them long I should get sadly *yawny:* — excitement, — after all, excitement is the very wine of life."

"Ah! but if we cannot do without strong stimulus, the mind must have lost its healthful tone," said Constance. — "I do but play the parrot, — I do but echo mamma's sentiments," added she, modestly, "in expressing this; — but have you never felt a little *yawny* even amidst the whirl of dissipation?"

"Why I have had my moments of melancholy musing, certainly," rejoined Helen, "when I have 'trod alone the banquet-hall deserted,'

> "'When lights were fled, and garlands dead,
> And all but me departed.'

But they have only been *moments;* in general the tide of life has flowed on briskly and pleasantly: — there is nothing I dread so much as a stagnation; and I am sure I should get terribly weary of that dull round of duties which people are so fond of prescribing."

"Well, I think that I should get terribly weary of that dull round of *pleasure* which some people are so fond of treading," said Constance: — "there is something so degrading in living to no purpose."

"To no purpose, my dear: — Oh! that is quite a mistake!" exclaimed Helen.

" That is, to no good purpose," added Constance.

" But is it nothing," rejoined Helen, " to live to enjoyment, — to feel that the moments wing their way,— that we never long to ' give time a shove ? ' "

" Three months, — only three months of my life," said Constance, — " I once passed in this whirl of dissipation ; and I confess that such a life would be distasteful to me, even putting graver reasons out of the question : — there is nothing in it that the memory clings to with pleasure. If I may quote Moore in my turn, I think such recollections are not at all like the vase in which roses have once been distilled : —

" ' You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang on it still.'

Such recollections have no sweetness."

" That, my dear Miss Grenville, is because you are a sort of incipient saint; but I assure you, to less sublime persons, the recollection of a gay scene is very pleasant : — the soft whisper, the admiring look, the bright wit, form a fair paragraph in Memory's page. I certainly do not sit down, like these said sublime persons, to balance the precise value of these things ; — for

if we went upon this plan, we might find out that every thing, from the king's sceptre to the baby's rattle, was alike insignificant. But I do not sport philosophy, — it is enough for me that such things make time steal pleasantly away."

"There is something in the glare of a life of pleasure," said Constance, "that dazzles and fatigues me: I prefer the repose of a quieter scene."

"Ah! you have caught that taste from Mrs. Grenville," returned Helen; — "and, indeed, if ever any body did give me a turn for that sort of thing, it would be she, — she is so gentle and sweet, and carries her saintship so meekly! — and you have occasionally a very demure, decorous look, — you manage very well, and chime in very properly and harmoniously, when grave subjects are discussed, — you can put in a word in season. Now I am completely stranded: — I am in an unknown country, listening to an unknown tongue; and I am, perforce, stupid and silent. Just recollect the circle in which I move, — the exciting atmosphere that I breathe: — my father, as you, perhaps, have heard, is a very clever man, — a man of great talent: — he abhors a vacuum quite as much as

Nature herself ever did; and he takes care to be surrounded by every thing clever, eccentric, and amusing, that he can collect: — certainly, we do now and then figure away rather a motley group in our drawing-room! — there is here and there a magnificent person who looks grand when forced into such fellowship. Sir Henry Lennox, for instance, had prodigiously the air of a prince in disguise when he honoured us with a visit: —

> "'Stately and tall, he stood in the hall,
> The chief of a thousand for grace.'

But the great advantage of such a circle is, that you have only to open your eyes, and your ears, and you must be entertained; and, I dare say, there are people who would be instructed by such scenes; but I have more of the butterfly than the bee in my nature."

"How very strange the quiet of the Rectory must appear to you!" observed Constance: — is it refreshing or monotonous?"

"At present the full force of contrast makes it pleasant: — it is like shade after glare — coolness after heat. Then its vicinity to the Priory," added she, bowing gracefully, "is not

at all to be deplored; but if I do find time hang heavy in this village, I mean to amuse myself with teasing Gerard, and provoking Miss Musgrave."

"A most amiable resolve!" said Constance, laughing.

"Why, as to Miss Musgrave, — to give her an opportunity of preaching, is doing her the greatest possible kindness: — there is no one thing those sort of persons like so well," returned Helen; "and as to Gerard, — I do not see why the good people of the present day should not be tormented a little now and then, as well as the St. Dunstans and St. Anthonys of former times: — they think it part of their vocation, and why should they be disappointed? — I shall merely use sufficient stimulus to excite the powers of his mind, for he is prodigiously given to abstraction and reverie."

"He was always very cheerful at the Priory," observed Constance.

"Ah! that was because there he was amidst kindred spirits; — now with his wicked cousin Helen he is in the delectable predicament of a fish out of water. — I am sure he is as mute as one of the finny tribe, sometimes for an hour

together: — and then he will suddenly rouse himself and talk; — ye gods! how he will talk! — To tell you the truth, I suspect that he is either falling in love, or into a religious melancholy, or else into a consumption: — pray, if it be the first disorder, can you at all guess who the Amaryllis may be, who has caught this *pastor fido?* — Is it a village maiden, all *rural rusticity*, as a friend of mine says, — or some fair one of high degree, to whom he dare not whisper his tender tale, — some one in the Tasso and princess style."

"That he has any tender tale to whisper is very doubtful," observed Constance.

"What a pity it is not that oracular lady we both admire so much! — they might set on foot the practicable scheme of reforming the whole world. — I do not think a smaller field would afford sufficient scope for the energy of that distinguished female apostle and reformer, Miss Musgrave."

Constance shook her head, and bade her lively companion adieu, at the gate of the Rectory.

CHAP. XXXIX.

"On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
No sleep till morn when Youth and Pleasure meet,
To chase the glowing hours with flying feet."

BYRON.

HELEN was not reduced to the alternative of pining in dulness, or of provoking Miss Musgrave. — It was true, she occasionally amused herself in the latter way; but it was to gratify her love of variety, rather than her appetite for stimulus; — for no sooner did the news of her arrival at Elton make its way to Percy, than he was seized with a sudden wish of visiting the Manor House. — If he was acceptable to Helen, amid the brilliant variety of her own circle, — if, even there, she occasionally indulged him with a passing smile, and confidential whisper, — he was likely to be more fully appreciated at a country pastor's fireside, when

"'November's sky was chill and drear,
November's leaf was red and sear.'

Elton, indeed, was fast improving, and the countenance of Jessy Twyford brightened with hope. — Edward Grenville had just arrived at the Priory; and the neighbourhood, anxious to show its sense of his value, was again the mirror of courtesy. — He was in the gayest spirits imaginable: — his patrimonial acres, indeed, were gone; but his debts and duns had also vanished for the time being: — he had a thousand or two left to waste, which he was accomplishing as rapidly as possible.

If Gerard, with all the drawback of his serious notions, had been received as a waif on a desert shore, — doubly welcome was the gallant Captain, who had a bright smile and gay whisper for every fair lady. — Jessy Twyford, indeed, secured the largest portion of these inestimable treasures: — she had resolutely marked him for her own, from the first moment of his appearance on the scene, and he received her attentions with sufficient gallantry: — she contrived, with the instinctive dexterity and enlarged benevolence of a flirt, to look kindly upon every beau, but to reserve her most sunny and bewitching smile for him.

Mrs. Courtland thought it incumbent upon her to give a quadrille party : — it was extremely inconvenient; for her eldest grandchild was seriously ill, and Benson, the best servant in her house, — her factotum, — had taken himself off in a huff; — nothing could be more inconvenient; — but she was persuaded that the neighbourhood expected it of her. — It was a hard fate; — however, she had only to submit to it with resignation, and the party was given.

" Well, people do odd things," observed Mrs. Jones to Mrs. Murray, as they drove into the sweep that led to Mrs. Courtland's. — " Who would think that poor little Anne Fenton was so ill? — I assure you, Mr. Maddox is very doubtful of her recovery."

" Very true, ma'am," returned Mrs. Murray, arranging her scarf: — " people do odd things, but every body has not the same feelings; and to say the truth, between ourselves, our good friend is quite a woman of the world."

The old ladies shook their turbans in sympathetic disapproval, and walked forward to receive Mrs. Courtland's smiling greeting with answering smiles, and to salute her guests with the sweeping courtesy of the old school.—There

was a mixture of triumph and mortification in Mrs. Courtland's feelings on this occasion: — the triumph arose from the circumstance that Sir Henry Lennox and Percy graced the revels; — the mortification, from the defection of that man of parts and figure, — Benson. — From the period of her residence at Elton, Mrs. Courtland had suffered more disquietude than can be well imagined from the simple circumstance that Lady Lennox had failed to pay her the compliment of a visit. — In vain was it echoed and re-echoed in her hearing, that Lady Lennox was an invalid, and called upon nobody; — such a reason might be sufficient and satisfactory to the world in general, but she felt aggrieved at being included in the large class: — from family and connection, her claim to the civility was unquestionable. — It was well that the retiring habits of Lady Lennox prevented immediate contact; for even the sight of the carriage and servants kindled an indignant flush on Mrs. Courtland's cheek. — Within the last two months, however, wonder at the impertinence of Lady Lennox had been exchanged for the most cordial feelings. — Colonel Fenton and Sir Henry had formed an acquaint-

ance on the Continent, and rejoiced to recognise each other on meeting at Elton. — Calls and civilities were immediately exchanged between the gentlemen; and Lady Lennox, with a sigh of resignation, coincided in the opinion, that, all things considered, it was expedient to pay her respects to Mrs. Courtland. — Intrenched amidst the privileges of an invalid, she personally declined the invitations that succeeded; and upon the young persons devolved the duty of performing in the drama of civil intercourse henceforth to be enacted. — The invitation to this quadrille party was accepted; — though Sir Henry had some few scruples about being mixed up with the Elton community, which were not at all reciprocated by Percy.

Many little circumstances disturbed the enjoyment of Mrs. Courtland on this occasion: — her imagination was at work; — like Sterne, who was predetermined not to give the Franciscan a single sous, she was predetermined not to give Benson's substitute credit for a single requisite: — she fancied that the ices were warm, and the coffee cold; — moreover, in the course of the evening, the feet of the dancers, and the

hands of the musicians, were suddenly arrested by the descent of a lamp, which, being precipitated to the ground, inundated Mrs. Grenville, and sprinkled Caroline Lennox; and, though Mrs. Grenville good-humouredly retired, to substitute a gown of Mrs. Courtland's, and only laughed at her masquerade-dress, and though Caroline again and again declared that the sprinkling was not of the smallest consequence, yet Mrs. Courtland continued vexed and disturbed. — "Such a clumsy accident was really mortifying! — It would not have happened," said she, in a reproachful tone, and in the hearing of the delinquent who had trimmed the lamp, — "it would never have happened if Benson had been here."

But the disquietude of the lady of the house did not appear to extend to her guests: — if bright smiles, and laughing voices, were to be trusted, there was a fair proportion of happiness in the room. — Malicious or philosophical observers, indeed, might have detected the flutter of vanity; — might, perhaps, have overheard the whisper of envy, or the sigh of discontent, but, to less curious observers, all was bright and fair.

Constance and Helen were decidedly the stars of the evening: — equally beautiful, and strikingly contrasted.

Constance moved with graceful dignity; — Helen with the airy step of a sylph: — the bright rich roses, wreathed in her hair, suited well with the laughing, sparkling eyes that beamed beneath them; — while the band of pearls that confined the parted locks of Constance harmonised, in its chaste simplicity, with the noble brow and somewhat lofty expression of her countenance.

Helen seemed made for the scene before her; — gaiety was her element; — she would have been a delightful queen of the Island of Pleasure, just fit to float down the stream of life, with purple sail, and gilded oar, to the sound of melting measures.

Constance, notwithstanding the glow on her cheek, and the animation of her eye, was evidently made for better things, and for a loftier sphere: — there was something in the energetic and intellectual expression of that face which said plainly, "Pleasure is not the element in which I live."

Jessy Twyford looked perfectly happy. — In a recess of the window she was seen, her hand resting on the arm of Edward, her eyes raised tenderly to his face, talking, in soft silver tones, of Ossian and moonlight, — of Moore and the Feast of Roses, — of Byron and his Thyrza, — of hearts formed by nature for love and poetry; — and Edward, in his turn, could do no less than talk of radiant eyes, and rosy lips, and "manly hearts with love o'erflowing."

It was cruel to interrupt so interesting a colloquy; but Helen, in the very spirit of mischief, determined, she said, to bring the fair lady down from the seventh heaven. — She took the arm of Constance, and, followed by several gentlemen, drew near enough to disturb the *tête-à-tête*. — The gentlemen were looking round with a critical eye, and estimating the quantum of beauty in the room, exclusive of their own party.

"I do not think those poor girls have danced to-night," said Helen, directing the looks of the party to two sedentary young ladies at the opposite side of the room; — "now, I am really sorry for them."

The gentlemen looked in the same direction,

but no relenting of heart or eye appeared to succeed the glance.

"Now, I dare say, if Gerard did so profane a thing as to join in a quadrille," said she, in a whisper to Constance, "he would pick out the dowdy, and square, by way of self-mortification; and why should not his example be followed?—I acknowledge no one for my knight," said she, aloud, "who does not take compassion upon distressed and forsaken damsels."

The gentlemen still continued unmoved and hard hearted, only reiterating their solicitations that Helen would indulge them with a waltz.

"I shall listen to no such proposition," said she, "till you have led out those desolate fair ones; — till then, I have neither hand nor foot, eye nor ear, at your service."

In vain the young men grumbled and remonstrated; — in vain they bewailed their hard fate, in having to pass through purgatory before they were admitted to elysium. — Helen was inexorable: — she gloried in her successful tyranny, and watched, with delighted eyes, the reluctant advances of the two cavaliers to their allotted partners; — the bows of the gentlemen; — the courtesies of the ladies; — the smile of joyful

assent gleaming through the veil of assumed indifference; — the feeling of triumph succeeding the comfortless state of hope deferred."

"It is really delightful to play the tyrant now and then," said Helen to Constance: — "I shall boast of my management to Gerard; — I shall tell him how successfully I promoted the practice of self-denial, and the exercise of benevolence."

"Vastly good-natured, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Somers, as she saw the young ladies led out: — "extremely considerate! I give Captain Grenville and Mr. Percy great credit: — it is not every young man in this day who is so thoughtful: — an attention, I dare say, which the Miss Fosters never expected."

"Yes; I can't think how it happened," said Mrs. Courtland, looking at the parties with much vexation; — "but I am not responsible: — I could not help including the Fosters, as they were on a visit to the Twyfords, and, I believe, they are very respectable people."

"Oh, very respectable, I am sure," echoed Mrs. Somers. — "Perhaps," continued she, lowering her voice, "the less that is said about their grandfather the better. — To be sure, the

world would go on very ill if we were all Montagues and Capulets : — but the grandfather was not merely plebeian, — quite from the dregs, I fancy. — The father was as worthy a creature as ever breathed : — I had my coals of him for years, and a more fair-dealing man, a more respectable tradesman, could not be ; — and I understand the daughters take after him, — as good girls as possible ; — but, I dare say, they never expected to dance with a Lennox," added she, with a smile ; —" however, it will be something for them to talk of."

Every word of this speech inflicted a pang on Mrs. Courtland : — she felt guilty of not having provided against the possibility of such a catastrophe.

" Well, I can't help it," exclaimed she ; — " though, certainly, it ought not to have happened : — I should have contrived better."

The more she considered the thing, the more glaring appeared the incongruity — the more unpardonable her own mismanagement ; and she moved across the room with the comfortless conviction that the evil was at once vexatious and irreparable ; — but never was disquietude more thoroughly wasted. — The Misses Foster

were good-natured, third-rate girls, neither very ignorant nor very vulgar: — they tried to be agreeable, and talked of that portion of the world in which they mixed; — and the young men were too well-bred, too entirely aristocratic, to make them feel that it was not the world with which *they* were most familiar: — they listened to their opinions on plays and actors, and to their eulogium on Kensington Gardens, with good-natured courtesy: and when they had conducted the young ladies to their seats, and made their parting bows, the Misses Foster, with elated looks, pronounced them to be very charming young men.

On returning to Helen they claimed the promised guerdon; and Sir Henry, giving his arm to Constance, detached her from the party.

"Miss Seymour is very attractive," observed Constance, when they were at a safe talking distance.

"She is generally considered so, I believe," returned Sir Henry; "and she has certainly both wit and beauty: — yet she does not satisfy my taste."

"You are fastidious," observed Constance. "What do you think are her faults?"

" It is invidious, perhaps, to point them out," replied Sir Henry.

" I think you may be candid," said Constance: — " with so many to sound her praises, she will not miss the echo of one voice."

" She is too brilliant and self-confident," returned Sir Henry: — " there is no feminine softness — no loveliness of character; and I suspect that her sympathies are not at all likely to interfere with her happiness.

" ' She comes like lightning through the cloud,
Shining bright, and speaking loud.' "

" I am afraid you are a severe observer," said Constance. — " I must send you to Mr. Gerard Mortimer for a lesson on charity."

This allusion to Gerard was harsh and untuneful to the ear of Sir Henry. — He had hovered about Constance, almost unconsciously, during the whole evening, and he thought her manner less discouraging than usual: — but, as a straw discovers the direction of the current, this observation appeared to him to indicate the bent of her thoughts.

" I know not what Mr. Gerard Mortimer's estimate of the lady may be," said he, coldly: —

" our tastes as to female excellence may be dissimilar."

" You would prefer a Griselda or a Penelope to a Hebe or a Calypso, I suppose," said Constance.

" An Octavia to a Cleopatra, certainly," observed Sir Henry.

" Yes, yes; but such a broad distinction does not apply in the present case," returned Constance: — " you may prefer, for instance, a lily of the valley to a rose, but still the rose is fragrant and beautiful."

" It is encumbered with thorns," said Sir Henry, somewhat sarcastically.

" But it will never want admirers," pursued Constance: — " it will still reign the queen of flowers."

" It will flourish, then, without the poor meed of my homage," added Sir Henry.

" Taste has its caprices, I see," said Constance: — " there is no standard, I believe, after all that philosophers have said upon the matter."

" Why, our taste as to character must depend upon our habits of thought and feeling," replied Sir Henry. — " If I am to stand on the defensive for the opinion I have expressed, I must say, that, as far as mere natural taste is concerned, I

cannot but admire Miss Seymour: — her beauty and talent command this species of admiration; — but *thinking* taste, or taste of the mind, and *feeling* taste, or taste of the heart, are not so easily gratified."

"You are entangling me in the maze of nice distinctions," said Constance, smiling.

"And do you not acknowledge their correctness?" enquired Sir Henry. — "In selecting a friend, for instance, is it not necessary that both thinking and feeling taste should be satisfied? — is it not necessary that there should be moral and intellectual harmony between them?"

"Yes; without this, there may be companionship but not friendship," replied Constance.

"I am glad to hear you say this," said Sir Henry, with energy: — "Miss Seymour, then, will not be a chosen friend of yours; — at least, I hope not," he added, in rather a lower key.

Constance looked up at Sir Henry, and was struck with the expression of his countenance: — there was an interest, amounting to emotion, to be traced in every feature. — It was a look that made the heart of Constance beat more quickly.

"You have no graver reason for the hope you are good enough to express than distaste," said she, endeavouring to control her feelings.

"I object to Miss Seymour's style of manner," returned Sir Henry, "and should certainly regret to see your own contaminated by its influence."

"Contaminated!" echoed Constance.

"Yes; it is a strong term," replied Sir Henry; "but a speck is contamination on a vestal robe."

Constance felt a blush of pleasure steal over her cheek.

"Perhaps," said she, "my own manner may meet the benefit of your censorship quite as much as Miss Seymour's: — I have been told that it is sometimes deficient in amenity and graciousness."

"There may be moments," returned Sir Henry, "in which those most interested in Miss Grenville may have to make such a complaint — moments in which, perhaps, they feel it acutely; — but forgive me," added he, "the very demon of officiousness seems to possess me this evening."

"Do not slander your own kindness, by giving it such a term," said Constance, whose feelings towards Sir Henry were every moment softening. — "To point out a fault is at once a compliment to the temper and understanding, which I am quite disposed to appreciate."

She said this with a winning smile, and an air of perfect truth and simplicity; and Sir Henry thought he had never seen her more engaging.

"I hope," added she, "you will soon congratulate me on my reformation."

"Cruel, to employ such a term!" exclaimed Sir Henry. — His admiring eyes rested for a minute on her countenance.

At this instant they were interrupted by the lively tones of Helen.

"I appeal, I appeal from your judgment," said she to Percy: — "Sir Henry shall be umpire. — I am contending for the probability of there being as many varieties of mind in this room as there are varieties in person, and your brother presumes to question the correctness of this opinion. — He fancies, I believe, with the ungallant poet, that, as it respects mind, 'most women have no character at all.'"

"I merely observed," replied Percy, "that the general, uniform drill of education had a tendency rather to produce monotony than variety."

"*Monotony!*" exclaimed Helen: — "as if woman, — bewitching woman, — could ever be monotonous. — Men, indeed, who wear out the spring of life in declining nouns, conjugating verbs, and describing angles, — men have a chance of being very dull; — but woman, — who just flits over the surface of half a hundred elegant pursuits, — woman must have variety of mind."

"Miss Seymour is talking nonsense," said Sir Henry; "but, as Johnson said of Rousseau, no one ever talked nonsense so well, without knowing it to be nonsense, and therefore we are willing to listen."

"Oh! but you must do more than listen; you must refute," returned Helen: — "a man always has the presumption to think that a bow and a smile are a sufficient reply to a lady's reasoning."

"*Reasoning!*" echoed Sir Henry emphatically.

"Oh! you are intolerable!" exclaimed Helen: — "that lordly look says, as plain as possible, I do not call woman a reasoning animal."

"I am afraid, Miss Seymour, you are proving your acquaintanceship only with the surface of things," returned Sir Henry. — "If my look said all that, it said more than it was entitled to say; — but though I believe woman to be both a reasoning and a reasonable animal, I by no means wish her to become an argumentative one."

"No, I dare say not," said Helen: — "it is not her province to detect a fallacy, or unravel a sophism; — a little imbecility is a grace in woman, is it not? — they are made to listen and smile, and look pretty, and be obedient."

"Exactly so!" exclaimed Percy, — "and to be loved, and cherished, and worshipped: — a logical, analytical, didactic, young lady is a most fearful person. — I should as soon think of falling in love with Euclid, or Adam Smith, — with a syllogism, or a parabola."

"And yet," said Constance, "as we are expected to be perfectly reasonable, it is hardly fair not to wish us to reason."

"Oh! but this is man's consistency, my dear Miss Grenville," returned Helen: "they are not content with the established order of affairs, but wish to separate those two loving things, cause and effect; — however, the truth is, we have an intuitive, instinctive perception of right and wrong, which saves all that weary process of thinking. — Men ponder, and consider about what is wise or foolish; — women feel it; — our quick perceptions are worth all their dull reasonings."

"We are quite contented that you should be what you are," said Percy.

> "'Auld Nature swears, the lovely dears,
> Her noblest work she classes, O:
> Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
> An' then she made the lasses, O.'"

Sir Henry again withdrew Constance from the group; and as he was leading her into another room, they met Edward:— he was passing them with only a bow of recognition, when Constance, laying her hand on his arm, stopped him for a minute.

"Is it not getting late?" said she. — "I am afraid my mother will be weary."

"Late! my dear!" exclaimed he: — "Oh, no, it is surprisingly early, I believe; — besides, there are two nice girls that I must dance with before I make my farewell bow to Mrs. Courtland: — as I have honoured every other pretty girl in the room, it would not be fair to leave them out; — they might take it to heart."

"And what have you done with Jessy?" enquired Constance.

"Oh! I have reserved a *bonne-bouche* for her, — for the last dance, I am her slave again: — we must have a little tender scene as a *finale:* — we shall talk of the last sounds of music, and the last steps of the dancers; this will remind us of the 'last rose of summer,' and the last leaves of autumn; — and then I shall say something *apropos* of lingering hopes, and indelible impressions; and —

"'She will look down to blush, and will look up to sigh,
With a smile on her lip, and a tear in her eye.'

Oh! it will be vastly moving."

"You should remember the old fable, Captain Grenville," said Sir Henry, laughing, — "what is sport to you, may be death to the fair lady."

"Ah! but the fair lady," returned Edward, "is one of those mysterious, invaluable persons, who can die a thousand deaths; — the arrows of Cupid sure enough pass through her heart of hearts; — she is killed on the spot; — but, like Maleger in the 'Faery Queene,' up she starts again, a minute after, alive and well, and ready for action."

"But may not the fatal moment come at last?" said Constance.

"Your compassion, Constance, must be enlarged, indeed, if it wastes itself upon a flirt," observed Edward: — "a flirt has always a dozen strings to her bow; and when one cracks, and is good for nothing, she fastens on another with surprising dexterity; — besides, you would not have me so hard-hearted as not to play Romeo to her Juliet. — I never go in quest of Cupid; but if he knock at my window, as he did at Anacreon's, would it not be churlish not to smile and beckon in my turn? — Never afflict yourself about the heart of a flirt; — it is perfectly safe: — young ladies of this description quite understand that —

"'We'll love them as long as we're able,
And swear for no longer than this.'"

Edward flew off to intercept a methodical looking young man, who was slowly making his way to the pretty girl to whom he had alluded.

"There is some truth, I think, in Captain Grenville's reasoning," observed Sir Henry.

"At any rate, it is a truth it suits him to believe," said Constance: — "but the game is not a very safe one, let who will be the player. — I fear," continued she, after a short pause, "that your sex are severe judges of female manners: — reserve is condemned as haughtiness, and a wish to please as flirtation."

"But there is a golden medium, which good taste, and good feeling contrive to find," returned Sir Henry; — "and then woman is resistless! — I should, however, certainly prefer an excess of reserve to an indiscriminate, undistinguishing, insatiable love of admiration, because it discovers both heartlessness and vanity."

"That love of general admiration, I cannot understand," said Constance: — "admiration and approval seem to me wholly without value, unless from those whom we can in return ad-

mire and approve; and this number must be very limited."

"But with many persons this is sufficient," said Sir Henry: — "they are incapable, perhaps, of deep, strong emotion, or of permanent feeling; and the complacent, pleasurable sensation, excited by this admiration, is enough for them."

"Yes, but an incessant craving for admiration must be painful, I think," said Constance, "because a day will come, — 'a day decreed by fate,' — when it must remain unsatisfied."

"I hope I have not been missed," said Mrs. Courtland, advancing towards them with a quick step; — "but I have just been to take a peep at my poor little Anna: — unluckily I happened to mention your name, my dear Miss Grenville, and she will not try to go to sleep till she has kissed you for the pictures you so kindly sent her this morning; — sick children have so many whims: — I am quite ashamed, — but if you could indulge her —— "

"With the greatest pleasure," said Constance; "but do not let me take you, — I shall find my way: — the white-room, I suppose."

"Yes, — but I am quite ashamed," returned Mrs. Courtland. — "A charming girl!" continued she, turning to Sir Henry, to whom she knew that the praise of Constance would not be unwelcome. — "A charming young woman, in my opinion: — there are persons who do not admire her manner, but it is only because she has more natural dignity than they can understand. — I have seen her, to be sure, a little high, and sometimes rather *brusque*, — but her heart and mind are incomparable. — I speak warmly, Sir Henry, because I feel so. — I have the bad habit of thinking aloud;" and she glided on to finish the course of civil speeches which she felt called upon to scatter around her.

"Captain Grenville dancing again with Jessy!" said she to Mrs. Twyford, *en passant;* "but who can wonder, she is looking so remarkably well?"

"Your son is really delightful! so pleasant and general," whispered she to Mrs. Grenville: — "at least as much so as a certain young lady will permit. — It is a great pity. — I have a real regard for her, and I do wish she would adopt another style of manner; — but we cannot expect every young lady to be a

Constance, — such a happy medium, as I was just observing to Sir Henry."

It was difficult to compliment Mrs. Murray and Mrs. Jones; — even Mrs. Courtland was compelled to practise the *nil admirari* system, as far as the ladies themselves were concerned; but she contrived to be extremely civil to their turbans, — and absolutely in love with Mrs. Jones's scarf.

Constance remained with the little invalid till the carriages were announced. — On passing through an inner room, to that where the shawls and cloaks were deposited, she found Mrs. Jones and Mrs. Murray in close conversation; — busy with their calashes, comforters, and confabulations, they did not hear the approaching footsteps of Constance.

"Yes, Sir Henry was quite devoted this evening, — and the young lady nothing loth," observed Mrs. Murray: — "the bait, I suppose, is taking."

"Why of course it would be an excellent catch for her," returned Mrs. Jones; — "and between ourselves, mamma, though she seems to take no notice, is not at all likely to throw cold water upon such a thing: — those quiet

people, my dear Mrs. Murray, are often excellent contrivers!"

"Well, — one cannot wonder at their wishing to bring it about; — one cannot blame them: — it is human nature, after all," replied Mrs. Murray.

At this moment, they descried Constance, who, unwilling to play the part of a listener, was seized with a sudden cough which produced as sudden a silence; — she had, however, heard enough, to surprise and disquiet her. — Human nature is curiously compounded; and it is often strange and humiliating to find how much even minds of a superior cast can be influenced by circumstances in themselves below contempt. — The observations of these two persons, for whom Constance felt neither respect nor affection, had not only the power of disturbing her serenity, but of producing an instantaneous change in her manner towards Sir Henry. — She had left him with pleasant words, and a pleasant smile; but as he handed her to the carriage and placed her in it, a total revulsion of feeling appeared to have taken place. — She was cold, distant, and repelling; — evidently impatient of his attentions, vexed at the care with

which he folded her cloak, and arranged the hood, to guard her from the night air; and her parting bow was formality itself.

SirHenry, surprised, disappointed, and somewhat offended, bowed coldly in his turn, and returned to the Manor House to muse over the caprices of young ladies in general, and of Constance in particular; — while Constance, conscious of her injustice, dissatisfied with herself and all the world, mused in an indignant mood over what she had heard. — The words — "an excellent catch;" — "the young lady nothing loth," haunted her memory. — That she, who so thoroughly disdained manœuvre, should be thus suspected; and, above all, that her mother should be so scandalously traduced, — it was not to be borne.

Had she sought relief by pouring out her thoughts to Mrs. Grenville, her calm good sense would have quickly made it evident, that this was one of the "impertinences that buzz awhile about us, and are heard no more:" — but Constance, anxious to spare her mother the slightest vexation, said not a word of the matter, but resolved in that spirit of wisdom which those who consult their feelings rather than their under-

standings so often exercise, — that if graciousness and civility to Sir Henry were to be thus interpreted, she would be careful not to err on that point.

CHAP. XL.

" ' *Eternal* love I vow,' the swain replies;
' But say, my *all*, my mistress, and my friend,
What day next week th' *eternity* shall end ? ' "

YOUNG.

" And he the light and vain one, for him there never wakes
That love for which a woman's heart will beat until it breaks ;
But yet the spell was pleasant, though it be broken now,
Like shaking down loose blossoms from off the careless bough.
They never came to fruit, and their sweet lives soon were o'er,
But we lived an hour beneath them — we never dream'd of more.
No vow was ever plighted ; we had no farewell to say :
Gay were we when we met at first, and we parted just as gay.
There was little to remember, and nothing to regret :
Love touches not the flatterer, love chains not the coquet."

L. E. L.

THE next morning, during breakfast at the Priory, the evening and the party were discussed. — Edward was in excellent humour with both, and pronounced them to be very pleasant.

" Well," said Constance, " as I returned home, I could not help repeating the words of the Persian ambassador, — ' Why for take so much trouble ? ' "

" Oh ! my dear, that is a most preposterous state of feeling at your age, and argues prodigious ingratitude to Venus and the Graces, who have lavished their gifts upon you," said Edward. — " Helen Seymour is a most fascinating creature; but upon the whole, nobody looked better, or was more admired than *Lady Lennox* elect. — Will your Ladyship have the goodness to indulge me with a little more sugar, — do not reserve all that is sweet for the happy Sir Henry."

" How can you be so absurd !" said Constance, colouring with vexation.

" Oh ! it meets with my most unqualified approbation, my dear," returned he, " so do not trouble yourself to blush about the matter : — there would have been much more reason for confusion if you had suffered the prize to fall into other hands; to be sure, ' his humour is lofty, his gait majestical; — but I know the gentleman to be a man of worth, and worthy admiration.' "

" You must amuse yourself as much as you think proper," said Constance, her cheeks still glowing.

"You looked particularly lover-like, and interesting last night," continued he, "meandering about arm in arm, and pausing occasionally to enjoy more entirely the honey of each other's words."

"I suppose we looked very much like other people," said Constance.

"And when you danced," continued Edward, —

"'Sure never a hall such a galliard did grace.'

The whole neighbourhood settled the thing."

"The whole neighbourhood, then, is very officious and disagreeable."

"Whenever it is hinted to me," observed he, "I always nod assent and approbation; and when pressed upon the point of wedding-cake and favours, I satisfy the investigators by allusions to the genial spring."

"You would not, Edward, be so unkind, so indelicate, as to give currency to such an absurd, groundless report."

"Unkind! my dear child: — is it not remarkably kind to give the poor dull dowagers of this village a theme for talk and thought? — besides, it is very proper that you should be

demure, and decorous, and so forth; but do not waste any disclaiming speeches on me; because I am a great observer, and look quite through the deeds of men: I am a person of marvellous penetration."

"Marvellous, indeed!" echoed Constance; — "but if you are determined to see the future through the medium of your own fancy, you will discover the cheat she has practised in due time."

"Yes, yes, that is all very fine; — and now," said he, consulting his watch, "I have not a moment to spare. — I must fly on the wings of love and hope to the old oak tree, there to meet my tender Jessy: — that spot for ever sacred, is to be our trysting place."

"My dear Edward," said Mrs. Grenville, "it really is not right to pay Jessy Twyford so much attention."

"Oh! my dear mother, you quite mistake the affair: — it is Jessy that pays me attention. — I really must bow when she courtesies; — when she opens her arms, what can I do but fall into them."

"Nonsense," said Mrs. Grenville; "do not rhodomontade so, but be serious for a moment:

— her family may really think your attentions have some meaning."

"Some meaning!" echoed Edward: "I hope you pay me the compliment to believe that I never act without a motive. — I mean, first, to amuse that very interesting person myself, — and, next, that very interesting person Jessy. — I assure you this will be a very pleasant passage in her life, and she will make a good deal of it in remembrance and description. — Mine will be added to that interminable list of devoted hearts from which hers has been torn by the cruel hand of destiny. — I should not wonder if we correspond for a short time: — her letters must be a prodigious treat."

"Well, I do not think the weakness and folly of others can excuse or justify our own," said Mrs. Grenville.

"Spoken like an oracle, my dear mother; but if we could not make a little sport with the follies of our fellow-creatures, life would be but dull work. — Can any person of common sense look in my face and think me serious? — have I at all the look of a person that means to turn Benedict? — No, no, Jessy is a flirt, and a co-

quette; but not exactly a fool. — I may say to her when we part, —

"'A fair good night to thee, love, a fair good night to thee,
And pleasant be thy path, love, though it end not with me.
Liking light as ours was never meant to last:
It was a moment's phantasy, and as such it has past.'"

"As well might we attempt to write upon the wave, as make an impression on that mind," said Constance.

Edward flew off, — and, laughing, kissed hi hand as he passed the window.

"I hope he is not quite so tiresome as he pretends to be," continued she: — "that he does not sanction reports utterly without foundation."

"Oh! do not waste a thought upon the subject, my love," said Mrs. Grenville: "such reports will refute themselves."

There was something in this observation that fell coldly on the heart of Constance. — Mrs. Grenville, then, did not, like the rest of the world, think that Sir Henry's were any thing more than common-place attentions. — She recalled his looks and manner, and felt that a different conclusion might be drawn; — but to allow any human being, however insignificant, to suppose for a moment that she was laying

siege to his heart, his hand, and his fortune, was not to be endured: — no, to the world she must appear indifferent, to him capricious: — the latter clause of the resolution gave her a heartfelt pang: — there had been a kindness in his manner that did not deserve such a return; — but it was a choice of evils, and she shaped her conduct accordingly: — her manner became increasingly stiff, constrained, and distant to Sir Henry; — while to Gerard Mortimer it was pleasant, winning, and courteous.

What was the natural inference to be drawn from such premises? — even Mrs. Grenville was deceived: — she thought that the delightful qualities of Gerard were fully appreciated by Constance; and that, superior to the vanity of wishing to attract where she felt not disposed to attach, she intended by the coldness of her manner effectually to distance Sir Henry.

Mrs. Grenville made this discovery, as she thought it, with regret: — love and lovers, indeed, were not often the theme of her thoughts or conversation. — She was by no means one of those mothers who believe marriage to be the consummation devoutly to be wished, the *summum bonum* in the destiny of a daughter. —

Mrs. Grenville formed few wishes on the subject, and indulged none: — she considered the control and regulation of the wishes as a very important part of Christian duty; — and she watched carefully against that silent waste of time and thought, which those who are little in the habit of self-discipline fall into, almost unconsciously, by the indulgence of vague and fruitless wishes: — she was far more anxious that Constance should cherish those habits and feelings which display themselves in all that is "lovely and of good report;"— far more solicitous that the circumstances of her life should tend to the improvement of her character, as a moral, accountable, and immortal being, than that her lot should be cast in the brilliant scenes of splendour and affluence. — There were, certainly, pecuniary difficulties in the way of her union with Gerard Mortimer; — but these, though not unimportant, were secondary in her estimation: — her fears upon the subject of his health, however, were by no means allayed: — symptoms which escaped a less vigilant eye discovered themselves to her; and that breaking up of affection, — the rending away of the dearest ties, — that bereft and desolate feeling which succeeds the glowing

tenderness of hearts united in the closest bonds; — all this she foresaw, and all this she would willingly have spared her beloved child. — If the heart of Constance had made its election, it was a secret she had not chosen to disclose; and Mrs. Grenville thought it quite right to wait her own moment for confession. — She did not scruple, however, to express without reserve her fears to her daughter, thinking it possible that it might open the way to confidence on her part. — Constance listened with great sympathy, confessed similar fears, spoke in terms of high, and almost enthusiastic encomium, and then sunk into silence.

CHAP. XLI.

" Prudence is a virtue compounded of judgment and resolution. We do not here speak of that narrow species of prudence, which is more properly called *worldly wisdom;* but we mean that enlarged, comprehensive wisdom which, after taking a calm view of the objects of happiness, steadily prefers the greatest portion of felicity.

" Two things are necessary to make any person prudent, — the power to judge, and the habit of acting in consequence of his conviction." MISS EDGEWORTH.

" HELP me, — help me with your counsel!" exclaimed Percy, drawing near to the group assembled round Lady Lennox's work-table with an open letter in his hand. — A harum-scarum friend of mine has contrived to get into a scrape, and I, his Achates, his Damon, his Pylades, am called upon to assist him with my wisdom. — I defer to yours."

" Pray, of what nature is the dilemma?" enquired Mr. Herbert.

" Oh, serious enough," returned Percy: — " he is at this moment travelling with the lady

of his love, as fast as four horses can carry him, to Gretna Green."

"Is she an heiress?" asked Mr. Herbert.

"She has not a sixpence," returned Percy.

"Then he will be ready to hang himself in a month," said Mr. Herbert.

"It is entirely an *affaire de cœur*," observed Percy: "a complete triumph of love and beauty."

"Pray what service do these children of wisdom claim of you?"

"I am to mediate with the gentleman's father," said Percy: "as complete an old crabstick as you ever beheld, tough, knotty, and inflexible."

"A charming task," exclaimed Mr. Herbert: "I wish you joy; — but why did he depart from the customary routine?"

"Oh, he has despatched a penitential epistle," said Percy: — "they composed it a fortnight before the elopement, — conned it over together, and pronounced it a master-piece. — She has the utmost confidence in its touching eloquence; — but he has his private misgivings, so I am deputed to explain, and apologize, and conciliate."

"I wish you all the success you deserve," said Mr. Herbert.

"Well, — he is a disinterested fellow, however," exclaimed Percy, "for starve they must, if my pleadings are in vain. — I wish, Harry, you would give them an invitation to the Manor House, — it would really be a charity."

"A lady of so much dignity and delicacy would be a very suitable companion for your sister and Miss Grenville," answered Sir Henry, gravely.

"She is a nice little girl," said Percy, "with a pair of as fine, soft, tender loving blue eyes as you ever saw. — Poor little thing! — I had some thoughts of running away with her myself once; and as to Frederick, I have a great respect for him: — a man who carries off a girl without a sixpence discovers a great many virtues, — courage, independence, decision, disinterestedness, — then a heart tender, devoted, where love reigns and rules."

"And that's a rare thing now-a-days, is it not?" said Mr. Herbert.

"Why, I do not know, indeed," returned Percy: — "I do not consider you to be a fair judge of the subject, inveterate bachelor that

you are: — what right can you have to talk of Love, —

" ' And the powers above,
And little Cupid?' "

" I beg your pardon," said Mr. Herbert, — " I am precisely the person to talk of him: — secure from his artillery, I am at leisure to observe his manœuvres. — I can detect him in all his disguises, and I have discovered, that winning as he is, with the wreath and lyre of Apollo, he is still more so, when trusted with the golden sceptre of Plutus."

"Treason! — treason against love and beauty!" exclaimed Percy; — " but pray," continued he, " does this slander comprehend woman, — gentle woman? or do you mean to affirm of man only, 'give him gold enough, and marry him to a puppet.' — why nothing comes amiss, so money comes withal?"

" I mean to say," replied Mr. Herbert, " that the counsel in the old ballad addressed to the fair ladies of England and Scotland, —

" ' Marry never for houses, nor never for land,
Nor marry for nothing but only love," —

would not be considered very orthodox doctrine in the present day."

"Nor in any other, I should think," said Mrs. Grenville. — "But though I do not wish to see the system of all for love revived, yet I should like to see that spirit which is content to sacrifice personal indulgence a little more in fashion."

"When will that day arrive?" enquired Constance: —"at present, cold calculating Prudence is a striking characteristic of the age we live in."

"And do you believe that enthusiastic, disinterested love has been laid aside with the helmet shield, and coat of mail; and that warm hearts and feelings vanished with the days of chivalry?" said Sir Henry.

"Not entirely," replied Constance: — "but I believe that in the present order of things the impulses of these warm hearts are checked by a thousand paltry considerations; and that the spirit of romance has been displaced by that of luxurious selfishness: — yet what can be more thoroughly contemptible,—more disgraceful and disgusting, — than a marriage of mere aggrandisement?"

"I admire your energy, Miss Grenville," said Sir Henry: — "it is, in my opinion, pollution, — absolute pollution!"

"Love appears to me to be far less despotic than formerly," said Mr. Herbert: — "that is, if history and tradition are to be believed. I have my private doubts of the extent of his despotism in former times; for tradition can multiply and magnify with the skill of a magician;— but however this may be, he is now only useful as an ally in marriages *à la mode*, but seldom rules and reigns as a sovereign; — indeed, blind as he is, perhaps the decline and fall of his empire is not to be regretted."

"I do not believe in this decline," said Percy: —"I believe that Beauty has lost none of her magic power; and that woman is as resistless as when she caused a long ten-years' siege, and laid old Troy in ashes."

"Now that her mind is enriched and refined, she ought to be more so," said Mrs. Grenville.

"Aye, aye; — but in spite of all these mental riches, and this refinement," said Mr. Herbert, —"when Love and Prudence meet in the field, nine times out of ten Prudence carries the day."

"It shall never carry the day with me," said Percy: — "whenever *I* marry, it shall be all for love, — there shall not be an atom of prudence

in it: — I will quaff, at least, one pure, delicious draught, — one cup of nectar, — in my life."

"If you have any quarrel with Prudence, I would advise you to shake hands and be reconciled," said Mrs. Grenville: — "you will find her spectacles and staff extremely useful in the path of life."

"Yes, yes, very useful to herself, no doubt," returned Percy; — "but if her bosom friend happens to fall into a river, she is so long putting on her spectacles, and stretching out her staff, that the poor friend is drowned during the process."

"No, no, — *my* Prudence — real Prudence — has not a grain of selfishness about her," said Mrs. Grenville: — "she is what Johnson has defined her to be, — 'Wisdom applied to practice.'"

"Well, in my opinion," replied Percy, "where prudence is a prominent feature in the character, it is never an attractive one: — it has no generous impulses, — none of that noble fearlessness of consequences which leads to personal sacrifice and heroic achievement. Before Prudence decides upon doing a great or good action, she stretches out her line, and lets

down her plummet, and measures the height, and depth, and length, and calculates all the chances, and balances profit and loss; and so the grace and charm of the action is lost."

"Oh! she is a most tiresome personage,—I quite agree with you," said Constance:—"I never knew a pattern of Prudence who was not odious."

"Oh! their virtues," continued Percy, "are like marble statues,—cold, dull, and stern, with none of the freshness and glow of life about them."

"You are both talking of the false Duessa who sometimes personates this virtue," returned Mrs. Grenville,—"and who no more resembles real Prudence than the two half-brother Cupids of the heathen world—true love and sensuality—resembled each other. No, no, Percy; discard Prudence from your band of virtues, and the rest will pine and languish,—their energy will be diminished, their usefulness gone:—charity will be often unavailing, courage will be rash, hope presumptuous, and zeal intemperate. Prudence, indeed, calculates consequences, as a good architect draws his plans, that beauty and usefulness may be combined in

her work: — far from being an impediment to great or good actions, it is as essential to their success as a foundation is to a superstructure. It is only castles in the air that can be raised without a foundation, and they have a sad trick of vanishing."

"Ah! they are very beautiful while they last," said Percy: — "brick and mortar make a sorry figure by their side."

"But as we need some shelter from the rough climate of this world," replied Mrs. Grenville, "I really must hazard your good opinion, by voting for the brick and mortar."

"Brick and mortar! my dear mamma," exclaimed Constance, laughing: — "the words bring us down to this dull earth too abruptly, and in a moment chase away all our beautiful visions. To transport us suddenly from a castle in the air, with all its brilliant colouring, to brick and mortar, is too cruel."

"Is substance, then, or shadow, the most valuable?" enquired Mrs. Grenville.

"Now really you disappoint me," said Percy: — "I never considered you as one of those cold, calculating persons with whom dull reality is every thing; — but I cannot stay to reproach

you, as you deserve: —I must be off: —I must seek out this flinty-hearted father, and try if the music of my eloquence will 'soften rocks, and bend the knotted oak.'"

"You had better fortify yourself with a good dinner first," said Mr. Herbert: — "the half-hour bell is ringing."

"No, I *must* be off," returned Percy. — "Pray tell your beads for me, my dear Miss Grenville," added he, in a pleading tone, as he quitted the room.

CHAP. XLII.

" Il n'y a que deux classes d'hommes distinctes sur la terre, celle qui sent l'enthousiasme, et celle qui le méprise; toutes les autres différences sont le travail de la société."

MAD. DE STAEL.

" When torpor threatens to chill the soul, enthusiasm warms and animates it; when the mind tends to be languid and enervated, it invigorates and braces it. 'Tis the fan of a warm climate, and the fur of a cold one. Who ever did much good to others without a degree of enthusiasm to loosen the faculties from their cohesion with self-love?"

MRS. GRANT.

" I WONDER how our friend Percy gets on with his delicate mission," said Mr. Herbert, when the party met again in the drawing-room, where they were joined by Gerard Mortimer: — " he will be troubled to make the worse appear the better reason, I have a notion, in this case: — does not your heart ache for the charming pair, Constance?"

" To say the truth, a run-away lady is not much to my taste," replied Constance.

"Why, she is soft and susceptible," observed Mr. Herbert, "and romantic enough to brave poverty, and all its thousand evils, all for love: — what would you have of her?"

"I think it is not upon the altar of true love that duty and delicacy are ever sacrificed," returned Constance: — "that high tone of feeling, which you term romantic, would not endure, far less sanction, the violation of either. By the by, dear mother, did you not do yourself injustice this morning, and give Percy a false impression? — Surely you do like a touch of romance in character: — I have heard you say that, like the glow on the landscape, it gives it warmth and richness."

"You are not going, I hope," said Sir Henry, "to question the correctness of your own conclusions?"

"Why, I confess," said Mrs. Grenville, smiling, "that though I have reached the age of wisdom, and may be expected to use a nicer balance in adjusting my opinions, I still do love a tinge of what the world calls romance of character; — that is, I love energy of will, and promptness of action: — I love to see the full tide of benevolent feeling bear away those obsta-

cles which might have proved formidable obstructions to a current less rapid. All this is beautiful; but then it is very consistent with that prudence which you are determined to decry: — it is one thing to conquer difficulties, and another to battle with impossibilities."

"But surely the fashion of decrying, as romantic, those kindling emotions and feelings which lead to generous exertions, and complete forgetfulness of self, is not very likely to have a favourable effect upon character," said Sir Henry.

"The virtue of temperament," exclaimed Mr. Herbert: — "and pray what is it worth? it is generally a Will-o'-the-wisp that leads us a weary chase, and then leaves us in a bog. You, girls and boys, choose to invest a romantic spirit with ideal virtue; but what can high-flown, romantic notions do, that principle will not do far better? There is this difference, indeed, that the one is sure to go straight to the point, — the other very apt to speed on beyond it."

"But do you not acknowledge," said Constance, "that what you contemptuously term high-flown notions belong to the class of characters which we most admire? — to a class in-

capable of selfishness, or littleness, whose mistakes even have something in them of the noble and generous."

"Ah, it is very well," exclaimed Mr. Herbert, "that these admirable people are thinly scattered; for, few as they are in number, they make a strange confusion now and then:—there is not a more mischievous animal in the world than your moral, spiritual, and political knight-errant, who generally wastes his energies in an attempt to achieve the impossible, and perform the impracticable."

"Ah, but the attempt is worth something," exclaimed Sir Henry:—"who does not love the Philanthropist who risks his own life to ameliorate the condition of humanity?"

"Who does not love the Missionary, who leaves a home of peace, and a land of light, to plant the cross in regions of darkness and death?" added Gerard: "there may be mistakes in the method,—there may be failure sometimes in the object,—but the attempt is glorious."

"And, after all, are they not ten thousand times more useful," asked Constance, "than the sluggish, selfish, calculating person, who sits

snug by the fire-side, revelling in sordid comforts ?"

" I will thank you Constance," said Mr. Herbert, " not to speak in that disrespectful, contemptuous tone of the large proportion of your fellow-creatures, who are doomed to the ignominy of sitting snug by their fire-sides."

" Duty places great numbers in that quiet nook," said Mrs. Grenville, — " and it is often the favourite haunt of usefulness."

" Yes, my dear mother, I am sure I have a very great regard for those whose duties walk their narrow round: — it is precisely the path I am called to tread, and, therefore, it is not at all to my interest to depreciate it; and as far as feminine feelings and personal taste go, I prefer its quietness and shade. — I really have a very proper respect and affection for the hens and chickens in a farm-yard; but I cannot admire them as I do the eagle that soars up to the sun, and revels in his light: — I have a very sufficient respect for the turnips and cabbages of the kitchen-garden; I cannot, however, look at them with the same admiring feeling with which I contemplate the majestic tree by the mountain side, that braves the whirlwind and the storm."

"It would, indeed, be a very sad mistake," said Mrs. Grenville, "to undervalue those who, in the quiet, unostentatious exercise of all the charities of life, are fulfilling the will of God, and diffusing happiness throughout their little circle."

"Yes, to pour contempt on such quiet virtues would be fatal to the best interests of society, and the best feelings of the heart," added Gerard: — "I believe among those who thus pursue 'the noiseless tenor of their way' may be found minds of the highest order, and hearts of the keenest feeling, — many, perhaps, who have felt and crushed the aspirings of ambition, — who have forgotten their own interests and preferences in the interests and preferences of others, and sacrificed their hopes and wishes at the shrine of duty."

"But we owe a great deal," said Sir Henry, "to those stirring spirits who arise, now and then, to show us what man can do: — they discover to us our capabilities and deficiencies: — who can hear, and read, and think, of what they have accomplished, without a humiliating sense of insignificance?"

"Yes, yes, their example is contagious enough," observed Mr. Herbert: — "one of these energetic innovators arises, who is to renovate the world, and he is sure to conjure up a herd of imitators, who caricature his extravagancies, and consummate his blunders. It reminds me of that wonderful and accomplished broomstick in the German story, so superior to all other broomsticks, which worked wonders, and fetched water, and filled all the vessels in the house in the handiest manner imaginable: — nothing could be more surprising, more admirable; but then there was no getting it to stop, — on it went; and when, in despair, the servant thought to make an end of its labours by cleaving it in half, he only doubled the evil,—both broomsticks went on with the work, till the house was inundated. Nine times out of ten these wonderful persons, whom you admire and emulate, open the sluices of mischief; and while novices applaud, wise men curse their officiousness."

"And do they not also open those fountains of life, and health, and knowledge, which had been hidden by the rubbish of ages?" said Gerard. — "Innovation has been the scare-

crow of a certain class for successive ages. — Were not Wickliffe and Luther considered to be most dangerous innovators? — Was not Columbus sneered at as a theorist, — Galileo imprisoned as a heretic?"

"Yes, every step in science has been watched and opposed by the Messrs. '*Good-enough*' of the day," added Sir Henry. — "Inoculation was deemed impiety, — printing, the work and device of the devil. When you have proved to me that we have attained all of which our nature is capable, then, and then only, I will acknowledge that we need not the influence of those master spirits who give a new impulse to the minds of men, — who shine as stars in the world."

"And as beacons, too," added Mr. Herbert.

"All depends on the object to which this energy is applied, and the principle by which it is regulated," said Mrs. Grenville: —"the same spark may kindle the flame that cheers, and the conflagration that destroys."

"But you do not like those dull, cold, inert bodies, from which no spark can be extracted; — do you, mamma?" said Constance: — "you do not like those negative characters who do

neither good nor harm, — who are content to dwell in decencies for ever?"

"A very respectable class," returned Mr. Herbert, laughing: — "excellent ballast in society."

"No, no, — a negative character is not excellent ballast, for it is not even harmless," said Mrs. Grenville: — "those who do not do all the good in their power do a great deal of harm, — harm to society, in the way of example and influence, — harm to themselves, if future responsibility be not a dream. The mistakes of one misguided enthusiast are blazoned through the world; — but who can number the sins of omission which are silently, but not less certainly, registered?"

"And yet these are the very persons who shake their heads at a benevolent scheme, and call it idle and visionary," said Sir Henry,— "who parrotise about romance and enthusiasm, and fancy that 'they are the people, and that wisdom shall die with them.' — I cannot bear those generalising terms,— those catchwords,— which the cold and selfish so readily adopt, and apply to virtues which they find it inconvenient

to practise, and to feelings of which they are incapable."

"Why should we have so great a dread of enthusiasm?" enquired Constance: — "surely the effervescence of a warm heart is better than the torpor of a cold one; and these people, while they consider enthusiasm as one of the seven deadly sins, can tolerate absolute torpor, even on the dearest and most interesting subjects."

"Whether this effervescence be harmless or not must depend upon the strength of the head," observed Mr. Herbert: — "a warm-hearted fool is a very noxious animal."

"Surely he is, at any rate, preferable to a cold-hearted one," added Constance.

"No, he is a thousand times more mischievous," returned Mr. Herbert: — "a child tossing about Congreve rockets would not be a greater nuisance:—he would blunder on through the life of a patriarch,—for experience furnishes a fool neither with land-mark nor anchor."

"But I hope you do not think that fate has invariably linked together warm hearts and weak heads," said Sir Henry.

"Not invariably," returned Mr. Herbert;— "but it is to be wished that the union was more

rare. The diversities of human character, however, are as endless as they are amusing. After sixty years' acquaintance with them, I feel sometimes surprised and perplexed: — the mixture of wisdom and folly, of sense and weakness,— the caprices of taste and temper, — the freaks of the heart and the freaks of the understanding, altogether form a curious picture. The poet might well exclaim, —

" ' What a piece of work is man ! ' "

" Yes, the more intimate our acquaintance is with human nature," said Mrs. Grenville, " the more must we feel convinced how much we need the influence of that strong controlling principle which can alone harmonise the discords of our nature, and bring out all the power and sweetness of that curious instrument, the human mind."

" Energy of character, under the influence of Christian principle," said Gerard, " must produce beneficial effects, because it purifies the motives, and keeps self in the back-ground."

" Yes," replied Mr. Herbert, " if the balance of sound judgment be superadded, — if the mind be not magnetised, and made to act irregularly,

by predilections which it mistakes for the certainties of truth: — but you sometimes see persons, even under the influence of these principles, make strange blunders, and diverge decidedly from the path of usefulness."

"Christian principle, simply and sincerely acted upon, at any rate prevents the judgment from being warped by any mean or sordid interest," observed Gerard: — "some good is generally effected, even amidst all the blunders that may be laid to its charge."

"Yes, yes, — good arose, doubtless, from the devices of Peter the Hermit, and other crazy enthusiasts," returned Mr. Herbert, — "and yet we may have a very reasonable dread of fanaticism: — good may arise from the eruption of a volcano, or the fall of an avalanche; but we had rather be beyond their influence, and out of their reach."

"Certainly, if a sound and just judgment be essential in the common concerns of life, it is peculiarly so in religious matters," said Mrs. Grenville, "which are ten thousand times more important than any others."

"But what can be more rare than that union

of strength and simplicity of mind, upon which a just judgment depends?" said Sir Henry.

"It is because people will not cultivate the judgment," observed Mrs. Grenville:—"because they will not accustom themselves to compare, and balance, and reflect, and view an object in all its bearings, that so many mistakes are made,—that zeal is wasted, and benevolence disappointed."

"Yes,—but need we quarrel with the principle, because, like all others, it is liable to perversion?" enquired Constance:—"what would become of the fine arts,—of poetry, music, painting, sculpture,—if enthusiasm were extinguished?—What a dull, cold world would this be!—The muses and graces would disappear,—the empire of imagination be annihilated,—all would be flat, tame, tiresome reality."

"I should be very sorry to crush enthusiasm of feeling," said Mrs. Grenville,—"more especially as it becomes naturally sobered down by time and experience; but the cultivation of judgment is the very thing that will prevent its waste,—that will regulate without repressing, and control without extinguishing it."

"I have a notion," said Mr. Herbert, "that as judgment matures, enthusiasm of feeling generally declines."

"No," replied Mrs. Grenville, — "I think not: —there is less expenditure of enthusiasm, —it is less frequently excited; but it loses none of its ardour, none of its character, — it is, perhaps, even more intense, for not being frittered away in worthless or inferior objects. The enthusiasm that sound judgment ratifies will, indeed, work miracles."

"There is rather a redundance of this feeling at work in the present day, upon some subjects," said Mr. Herbert: — "for instance, is there not quite enthusiasm enough, as it respects education, to delight the sanguine, and alarm the prudent?"

"We shall not have time," said Mrs. Grenville, smiling, "to quarrel with you on that point this evening,—for it is late, and we must be going."

"I hope, sir," added Gerard, "that you mean to give us the sanction of your presence at the Rectory to-morrow. We are to meet there, to consider the plans for the new schoolhouse.

"Yes, yes, — I shall be there to keep you all in order," said Mr. Herbert. — "We sober-minded people must not desert our post," added he, handing Mrs. Grenville to the carriage.

CHAP. XLIII.

" Who, from th' abuse of what is good,
Adduces reasons to suppress it,
Should throw away all wholesome food,
Because some cooks so badly dress it."

" Education! Pshaw! there it is now; these book-men. — Education! sir; bless your soul, sir! they have a great deal too much — they know too much already."

ENNUI.

A NEW school-house had long been a desideratum at Elton. The old cottage, which had hitherto served that purpose, with its low roof and small casement-windows, admitting little air, and less light, was better suited to the quantum of instruction imparted thirty years ago, than to the more enlarged demands of the present day: — then the dame, in her neat coif and pinners, sat, perhaps, amidst fifteen or twenty scholars, sole guide and oracle in all the mysteries of the sampler and *a*, *b*, *c*; — then you might have heard the best scholars spelling and stumbling over "the golden image that Ne-

buchadnezzar the King had set up;"— and the considerate dame, to relieve her own perplexity, and that of her pupils, begging them to call the name *Nazareth*, and let it pass.

The day of emphasis and effect, of fluency and correct pronunciation, had not yet dawned, nor did she know any thing of the arts of filing and wheeling, of marching and countermarching, now practised by the little troops, — neither signs nor wonders were performed by our good dame: — but sometimes, on a summer's afternoon, the children might be seen assembled round her under the spreading tree, that half over-shadowed her little dwelling; — and often would she stop her wheel, and look round upon them with maternal kindness; and often might she be heard — talking with real interest of the dispositions, hopes, and prospects of the little group. She had always a good word to speak, or a kind wish to breathe for them when they took their leave of her, to be promoted to the dignity of a *place* under the roof of Mrs. Jones or Mrs. Smith, who kept a chandler's shop and a girl.

Under the old system there was a greater expenditure of labour, with less visible effect

than is now produced; — but there was, perhaps, more heart discovered, — more of individual affection and interest inspired. The necessity of reform, however, had been insisted upon at Elton some years before, with as much warmth as in larger communities. The good dame resigned her sceptre, to make way for a very clever person, drilled and disciplined from a central school: — Lady Lennox found out for her a snug cottage and pretty garden, — and, with a pension from the Manor House, the evening of her days passed serenely away. To those in her confidence, she now and then whispered a doubt as to the success of the new system, — and a smile of triumph would steal over her withered features, when listening to the comparisons occasionally instituted between the stitching and marking of the present race and those of the olden time.

Except these slight indications, however, nothing of a hostile spirit could be detected: — she nodded good-humouredly to the children as they passed her door, and now and then chatted with the new mistress; though there was, perhaps, some distance preserved in the courteousness she thought fit to show.

Whatever might be the quality of the instruction imparted, the number of pupils was trebled under the new plan. The lady visitors who went to listen and approve came forth pale and panting, lifting up their languid eyes in dismay and commiseration: — every body pitied the children, and talked of them for a minute or two as they walked home, — and then children and school-room were forgotten till the next examination-day, when pity was again renewed, and again died away.

Mr. Mortimer, however, seldom allowed his energies to evaporate in mere emotion: — he took the subject into consideration, began to devise expedients, and propose plans; — but though there was a remarkable unanimity of opinion as to the inconvenience of the old school-room, there was, by no means, so much unanimity about the erection of a new one: — heads of families, when appealed to for their countenance and contribution, reverted to the old system, — talked of its sufficiency; and doubted, after all, whether good was done by all this education.

Mr. Mortimer and Mrs. Grenville talked over the delicate subject of ways and means

again and again: — obstacles and difficulties seemed to accumulate; till, at length, Sir Henry magnanimously resolved to supply all deficiences from his own funds. Then came disquisitions as to the height, breadth, length, and fitness of the building: — Sir Henry determined that it should be in good taste, — Mr. Mortimer talked only of the necessity of simplicity and convenience: — his son Gerard petitioned that it might be on the site of the former one, and under the shadow of the old oak.

They called a council, and met at the Rectory to settle all preliminaries. Mr. Herbert would not lose so favourable an opportunity for a discussion: — he joined the party, and drew his chair close to the table, to inspect and criticise their plans.

"We are going on charmingly," said he, rubbing his hands with great glee: — "the march of intellect is proceeding to your heart's content. — Schools in every corner, — scholars in every cottage, — philosophers in every workshop, — workmen wiser than their masters, — children wiser than their parents. — Oh! it is a promising state of things: — the quacks and

theorists in politics and religion may rejoice, for the leaven is working admirably!"

"You dread the diffusion of knowledge," returned Sir Henry: — "I think it is as reasonable to dread the circulation of air, or the diffusion of light."

"I object to such a flood of light as will dazzle and bewilder rather than guide," replied Mr. Herbert; — "I object to air too rarified to be breathed by common lungs."

"I am willing to run the risk," observed Sir Henry. — "The inhabitants of the polar regions, who are stinted of the sun's beams, are but a dwarfish race: — and so it is with those who are stinted of the light of knowledge: — neither the moral nor the intellectual man attains his fair proportions. — I see not the mighty evil that can arise from a more equal distribution."

"Do you flatter yourself," said Mr. Herbert, "that you will increase the sum of human happiness by all this illumination? or that by refining and stimulating the intellect, you will multiply the contented and laborious? — besides, knowledge is power, — and is power fit to be intrusted to all hands?"

"So reasoned the priests and monks," observed Gerard Mortimer, "who kept the fountains of life from the people, and allowed them to taste only of their own polluted cisterns, — and what was the effect? — 'darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the people.'"

"Those churchmen and monks, of whom you speak with so little reverence," replied Mr. Herbert, "notwithstanding all the abuse that has been heaped upon them, did a vast deal of good. — What would have become of learning, arts, and religion without them? — Who founded your colleges? ungrateful man that you are. — Who built your churches? — who rescued the treasures of ancient wisdom from Gothic ignorance? — Science, literature, jurisprudence, and the fine arts are alike indebted to them; — but

> "'The evil that men do lives after them;
> The good is oft interred with their bones.'"

"I honour them for the good to which you refer," returned Gerard: — "I thank them for preserving the pages of Homer, and the classical remains over which we love to pore: — I thank them for the philosophy of Aristotle, and

the pandects of Justinian: — above all, for having preserved the sacred records of truth; but I do not thank them for the corruptions of Christianity. — I must quarrel with their vices. — I must complain, that when light beamed upon the world they sought to extinguish it, or rather to substitute the dim taper of the cloister and the cell. — When I consider the evils and privations of a state of ignorance, I cannot think with any great reverence of those who sought to perpetuate its empire."

"What delight can be compared to that which arises from the cultivation and expansion of the intellect?" said Sir Henry; —"and why should we deny to others so pure and rich a source of enjoyment?"

"We are justified in denying to others that knowledge which will unfit them for the station they are to fill," replied Mr. Herbert,—"which will render vulgar occupations and common pursuits distasteful and disgusting."

"But we are yet to learn what degree of knowledge will produce this effect," said Sir Henry. — "Has the experiment been fairly and largely made in England? — In Scotland, where there is a considerable diffusion of science

and general knowledge, are the peasantry less laborious because they are more intelligent? — or the middle classes less sober and industrious, because the means of education are cheap and diffused? — No: — let us say with Dr. Johnson, 'The efficacy of ignorance has long been tried, and has not produced the expected consequences, — let knowledge, therefore, take its turn.'"

"The experiment will not be completed in our day," said Mr. Herbert: — "so it is not for us to decide upon the result: — but there is a remarkable tendency to overdo in human nature; and, upon the whole, I think there is some truth in the observation, that no nation ever went so suddenly and universally mad upon the subject of education as the English: — the mania has spread through every class and department in society, and the consequence is, that things and persons are all getting, as fast as possible, out of their right places: — the counter is forsaken for the counting-house, — the counting-house for the church, the army, and the bar; — and in the lower departments, an alarming metamorphosis is taking place. — The race of female cooks is absolutely fading

fast out of the land: — it has been swept off by the full tide of education, to make way for countless tribes of ladies' maids and nursery governesses: — housemaids have set up albums; and porters and footmen beguile the tedious interval of showing-in and showing-out visitors with discussions on the merits of Scott and Byron!"

"Oh, I can believe any thing, sir," said Mrs. Bentley, — who had listened in silence to the argument with a dull, puzzled air, till the mention of cooks and housemaids brought the matter home to her business and bosom: — "I can believe any thing," continued she. — "Years ago, my poor dear Mr. Bentley used to say, — 'Mark my words, — there will come a time, when you will see what all this racket about education will end in.'"

"Why, perhaps you would hardly believe," said Mrs. Courtland, "that a servant who lived with a friend of mine actually gave her warning, because the worthy, respectable old lady did not talk grammatically. — Can you conceive of any thing so preposterous?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Herbert, "this delicate fastidiousness is rapidly increasing: — they ab-

solutely expect now to be furnished with mental entertainment. — A fellow offered himself to me in the capacity of a groom, the other day, and when I asked him his reason for quitting his last place, he said, with the utmost *sang froid*, ' Why, Sir, master was so dull in the tilbury ! ! ! ' "

" I assure you," said Mrs. Courtland, " my housemaid writes letters on paper, gilt, hot-pressed, and sealed with a forget-me-not, and amuses herself with conning my cards and notes, instead of using her broom and duster : — it is actually true," continued she, with an injured look.

" As to writing, ma'am," said Mrs. Bentley, " my poor husband had not common patience with their learning it. He used to say, ' What can they have to write about, but sweethearts and nonsense ? ' "

" Yes, yes, ma'am," said Mr. Herbert triumphantly, " the day seen by the prophetic eye of Mr. Bentley is fast approaching : — the farce of ' High Life below Stairs ' is performing in a pretty extensive theatre."

" I shall not take alarm," said Gerard, smiling, " even at these portentous signs : — if the

distinction of castes be destroyed in the intellectual world, — if the Brahmin, the Soodra, and the Paria, be no longer separated by the tyranny of law and custom,— there will still be distinctions that cannot be lost: — not only will there be giants and dwarfs, but the intermediate space will be occupied by minds graduating from one extreme to the other; for the idea of intellectual equality is a dream: — it never can exist while there is any difference in original capacity, or any difference of circumstances. — Intellectual pre-eminence depends very much on that leisure which the common mass of mankind cannot command."

"It is precisely because the mass of mankind have very little leisure," said Mr. Herbert, "that I think the modern attempt to render the lower classes scientific and philosophical full of danger: — it is superficial knowledge which is dangerous; — it excites vanity and self-confidence; — it inflates the mind instead of feeding or sustaining it. — A mere bird's eye view of the arts and sciences imparts no fixed or distinct knowledge of them, depend upon it: —'drink deep or taste not' will be found a wise precaution in this case."

"I do not dread the diffusion of knowledge," observed Mr. Mortimer, — "if while we stimulate the intellect, we enlighten the conscience; if we take care to cultivate Christian principles, and foster the habits that arise out of them; — but I think it becomes those who feel the value of Christianity to be careful on this point, — to be sedulous in the inculcation of sound Christian principles. — It is their salutary influence that will give a healthful tone to the mind, and the moral character: — those will not be puffed up with knowledge who have become acquainted with wisdom: — neglect this, and I do think you place in the hands of the multitude an engine as mischievous as it is powerful; but I hope we shall not be guilty of this cruel neglect: and I confess I am not one of those who contemplate the spread of science and knowledge with alarm; — I do not think ignorance a shield and buckler against the passions and temptations of life. — I believe that by diffusing a taste for rational pursuits, and by supplying wholesome food for the leisure hours of the poor, you leave them less open to the seductions of gross vice and coarse pleasures."

"Now and then, perhaps," said Gerard, "a person of strong original capacity may rise above the sphere in which he was born, by means of the knowledge imparted; and this is as it should be: — but these instances will be too rare to excite alarm. — Consider, even among those who have in the pursuit of knowledge 'all appliances and means to boot,' how few obtain celebrity, — how few stand out pre-eminently and distinctly as lights in the intellectual world."

"Be this as it may," observed Mr. Mortimer, "it is idle now to discuss the question, whether the poor shall be educated; — the decree has gone forth, — the great engine is already at work, and it is our main business to direct it to useful and important ends."

"I have no great confidence in the effect of direct precept in the work of education," observed Mr. Herbert: — "it is so counteracted by circumstances, that it accomplishes scarcely any thing: — there is always a vast deal of what has been happily termed insensible education, which goes on in defiance of systems and precepts, and is more effective than either."

"But we must not expect more from education than it is calculated to produce," said Mr. Mortimer: — "it supplies instruction, — this is one great point; for the difference between a human being cultivated and uncultivated is immense; and it influences, and in a great degree controls, the personal habits, — this is another great point."

"Aye, aye, — but it very often gives facility to corruption, and quickens the energies of mischief," observed Mr. Herbert.

"But because in a few instances it may do this, is its general utility to be questioned?" asked Gerard: — "is not ignorance the fruitful source of crime and misery? — knowledge, indeed, may be perverted by the folly and wickedness of man, as a pure spring may be poisoned; but are we, therefore, to conclude that it is the natural effect of water to produce disease and death? — certainly, purposes of mischief may be sometimes accomplished by a person who can read or write, that could not have been compassed by an uneducated man, — but for one such case, may we not bring forward ten thousand in which reading and

writing have contributed to the improvement of the character in principle and practice?"

"It is easy, my dear sir, to speak in round numbers, that have an imposing effect upon the ear," returned Mr. Herbert; "but wickedness sharpened by wit is somewhat more dangerous than in its obtuse state. — And pray, does crime decrease? — Are our prisons less full and our calendars less dark in their histories, than when peasants knew only how to till their fields, and mechanics to frame their tools?"

"Have we not an increased population, which may, in some degree, account for increase of crime?" said Gerard: — "besides, we ought to wait with patience; the harvest will be gathered in time: but we have but just sown the seed."

"The poor, in this day, *will* be supplied with knowledge," observed Mr. Mortimer: "therefore to leave them to glean religious principles as they can, is, in my opinion, a very hazardous experiment: — the acknowledged strength of early associations, and the power of habit, admonish us diligently to sow the *good* seed, and leave the event to him who giveth the increase. — Even philosophers and

infidels, — the careless and the indifferent, — unite in admiring the graces and virtues of the Christian character : — few will deny that, if generally practised, the world would assume a new aspect : — if these graces, then, are valuable, it is certainly of the highest importance, that the religion from whence they spring should be the animating principle, — the very stamina of the mind ; and to secure this as far as we are able, it must be interwoven with the earliest habits and feelings. — Whoever *wishes* religious principles to govern the conduct in life, must early influence the heart and the affections in their favour ; — and those only, who do not desire to see such principles in action, can question the wisdom and expediency of establishing them upon the rational foundation of early and sedulous culture."

They now proceeded to inspect the plans, — and soon after the party dispersed.

The reasoning which had been advanced produced no effect whatever upon Mrs. Bentley, and left Mrs. Courtland in the philosophic state of doubt.

Mrs. Bentley took her leave, in the firm conviction that education was a great evil ; — and

Mrs. Courtland accompanied her through the village, saying, —

" To be sure, Mr. Mortimer reasons wonderfully well upon it: — what he says is very true. — He is a most excellent man; and if every body could be as judicious as himself, the happy medium might be hit; — and perhaps there would be no danger in making the poor as wise as ourselves: — but as it is, — and considering all things, — there is certainly a great deal of good sense in what Mr. Herbert says: — I am sure there is no knowing what to think, or what to do," added she.

Though Mrs. Courtland's opinions were thus unsatisfactorily balanced, her purse had been opened with the utmost liberality, — she had given largely to the funds of the school; — but felt quite uncertain whether, by so doing, she had contributed to the weal or to the woe of the community.

CHAP. XLIV.

" Books are not seldom talismans and spells,
By which the magic art of shrewder wits
Holds an unthinking multitude enthrall'd.
* * * Some the style
Infatuates, and through labyrinths and wilds
Of error leads them by a tune entranced;
While sloth seduces more, too weak to bear
The insupportable fatigue of thought;
And swallowing, therefore, without pause or choice,
The total grist unsifted, husks and all."

COWPER.

THE spirit of improvement, which pervaded the village of Elton, discovered itself not only in a more enlarged system of instruction for the poor, but in a provision for the mental hunger of the rich, by the establishment of a book society.

It was entirely under female management, and the monthly meetings for the regulation of public business were rather of an amusing character.

The endless diversity of Mrs. Courtland's opinions, — the redundant communicativeness of Mrs. Somers, — the misty dulness of Mrs.

Bentley upon all literary subjects, — were brought into curious and amusing contact.

Mrs. Courtland generally contrived to look over the books that were in circulation; but amidst the hurry of conflicting engagements, and the crowd of petty anxieties by which she was assailed, her mind was seldom sufficiently at liberty to enjoy a literary work; nor could memory, under such circumstances, be expected to preserve a very faithful register of its object or character. Upon the whole, reading did but little for Mrs. Courtland.

Mrs. Somers pretended to no literary taste, — a peep into a review, or a glance over a biographical memoir, was sufficient for her; — but she was of far too social a spirit not to pay her guinea with the utmost readiness: — "it was vastly pleasant" she observed, "to meet so many good friends."

Mrs. Twyford, too, professed not to be a reading lady, — indeed, if the truth had been told, it would have appeared, that she was not quite free from the notion, now fading away, but current among good housewives thirty years ago, that it was waste of time to pore over books. However, in this age of literature, there

was no acting up to her convictions, and she therefore subscribed for the gratification, if not for the benefit, of her daughters. — Miss Twyford was not sorry to be considered a little blue: — she talked superciliously of novels, — dabbled now and then in science and philosophy, — and criticised the list of books proposed with an air of conscious superiority.

Mrs. Bentley having much leisure, and a slender purse, thought it right to reap all possible benefit from her subscription. She read every book *through*, — but being wholly destitute of memory or discrimination they served only to beguile her time, and bewilder her understanding. Such a jumbling of titles! such confounding of authors! such confusion of dates! such a travestie of sentiments! To hear her favourites thus hashed up by Mrs. Bentley was no light affliction to Constance, — and she had always a peculiar dread of being seated near her at these meetings. Fate, however, was perverse, and now and then placed her in immediate contact with the good lady; — whose prosy observations, and endless questions, while they vexed her ear, compelled her attention.

"What are they proposing now, my dear?" said she to Constance, on one of these occasions: — "I don't hear what they say."

"The 'Inheritance,' ma'am, by the author of 'Marriage:' — it is highly spoken of," replied Constance, in a tone of resigned civility.

"Ah, 'Marriage;' — that is by the author of 'Waverley,' is it not, my dear?"

"Oh, dear no, ma'am, — quite a different person," returned Constance: — "'Marriage' is by a lady."

"Well, — I was persuaded it was by the author of 'Waverley,' said Mrs. Bentley: "it is something about Scotland, though, is it not?"

"The scene is chiefly in Scotland," replied Constance.

"Well, — I thought so," said Mrs. Bentley, glorying in her own intelligence. — She paused for a minute, with a reflective expression of countenance, and then added, — "I am sure somebody, — I can't tell who, but I think it was Mrs. Somers, — but somebody told me, that, after all, those books were written by a Scotch lady, that lived in the Highlands."

"An extraordinary communication, indeed,

ma'am," returned Constance, not choosing to waste a word of refutation.

"And what are they going to have now?" continued she.

"'Our Village,' by Miss Mitford; — a delightful volume," said Constance.

"Yes, — she is a charming writer, indeed, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Bentley.

If this lady's confusion was trying, her praise was still more afflicting; — it was so parrot-like, — so utterly mindless, — so completely the echo of an echo, — that Constance shrunk from these panegyrics with peculiar sensitiveness. To have her favourite Miss Mitford lauded by Mrs. Bentley was an ordeal only to be met in silent endurance.

"It is the same that wrote 'Pride and Prejudice,' is not it?" enquired Mrs. Bentley.

"Not at all, ma'am," exclaimed Constance: "they are quite different persons, though equally delightful authors."

After passing about half an hour in detailing the title-pages and tables of contents of the various books proposed, — after being called upon to repeat divers observations, not very

original, — and sundry objections, not very forcible, — the patience of Constance began to wane: — she had hitherto endeavoured to school herself into the difficult task of patient courtesy; but she now, with a look of extreme weariness, turned to her next neighbour, in the hope that Mrs. Bentley would follow her example, — the reprieve, however, was short: — in a few minutes that lady again touched her arm, and with a puzzled and recollective look, said, "I am thinking of 'Pride and Prejudice,' my dear: — is not there something about a Mr. Knightley in it?"

Constance heaved a desponding sigh, — "That is another work of Miss Austen's: not 'Pride and Prejudice,' ma'am," returned she.

"Ah! well I know there was something about a Mr. Knightley in one of them," said Mrs. Bentley.

This was the sum of improvement usually derived from her literary pursuits. — Constance, now and then, when somewhat impatient for a volume, had taken the opportunity, during a morning call, of moving Mrs. Bentley's mark thirty pages forward; and that lady had taken up the thread of the discourse with as lively a

comprehension, and as much complacency, as ever, — entirely unsuspicious of the chasm that had been mischievously made. — In most cases, however, she did manage to ascertain what the books were about; — and after having read every word of 'Rome in the Nineteenth Century,' transferred the volumes to Mrs. Grenville, with the observation, that there was a great deal about Rome in it!

Constance, to escape any farther enquiries now crossed to the other side of the room, for the ostensible purpose of borrowing a pencil of Mrs. Grenville; — and as she drew near, caught the tones of Mrs. Courtland's voice: —

"Well, really," exclaimed that lady, in a sort of audible whisper, "though I did vote for the book, for I knew it was Mrs. Jones's wish, yet I cannot regret that it is negatived: — I hope I like what is good as well as any body; — but upon my word fifty-six sermons in four days are more than I *can* undertake."

Mrs. Courtland was somewhat ruffled when she made this confession: — she had rashly proposed a magnificent publication, with superb illustrations, proportionably expensive; at which

the prudent and economical took fright, and the book was consequently black-balled.

"It is quite right, quite proper, I dare say," whispered she to Mrs. Grenville, in a tone of ill-suppressed vexation. — "I ought not to have proposed it; — but I think the thing might have been done, if there had been a spirit of accommodation; — however, I feel the less obliged."

"Our funds will not allow us the indulgence at present," replied Mrs. Grenville, who was one of the guilty party: — "not to admit so beautiful a book must be a sacrifice: — 'our poverty but not our will consents:' — perhaps after the next quarterly meeting we may be richer, and then it can be included."

"Oh, not on my account," returned Mrs. Courtland: "I shall order the book the moment I get home, from my own bookseller; — but I am sure I am much obliged to you, Mrs. Grenville, for your consideration: — indeed, I have so little reading time, that I think I shall withdraw from the society altogether."

"Oh, it is a pleasant thing upon the whole," observed Mrs. Grenville.

"Why, that is very true, it is very pleasant," replied Mrs. Courtland: "and I am sure I would not do any thing unhandsome on any account; — but still, if people are unaccommodating, it destroys the comfort of the thing."

"I think our list is rich this time," said Mrs. Grenville, referring to it, and wishing to divert Mrs. Courtland's thoughts from the prohibited volume.

"I am sure I do not know what is ordered," returned Mrs. Courtland, still visibly discomposed; "for Mrs. Somers was talking the whole time, — giving me the history of the new county member and his family, and really I am quite bewildered. — No, — I cannot stay to ascertain now," added she, rejecting Mrs. Grenville's offered list; — "for I have a gentleman waiting for me at home, so you will excuse my slipping away."

"It is a pity Mrs. Courtland is so easily offended, — it is really quite unpleasant," said Mrs. Murray, as she took Mrs. Jones's arm, and slowly pursued her way home.

"Yes, and I *do* wish our good friend Mrs. Somers would not talk so much," observed

Mrs. Jones: — "she is a very excellent neighbour; but it is quite worrying."

"Such a dose of Mrs. Bentley," said Constance, when she was once more *tête-à-tête* with her mother, on their return to the Priory: — "if she could but throw down her stupidity on the mountain of miseries — it would be a happy deliverance! quite a public benefit. — Really she only possesses instinct, and that not of the highest order. — I think Mr. Bentley, as a clergyman, was quite unjustifiable in marrying such a tiresome woman: — there she is, — widow of the old incumbent, with a claim upon one's civility, never to be forgotten, — and an excess of stupidity that must be ever remembered. — A clergyman's wife, if disagreeable, is quite an infliction on the neighbourhood, — such an incumbrance, — there is no shaking her off."

Mrs. Grenville began to remonstrate.

"Forgive me, my dear mother; — but if you had witnessed her cruel demands on my patience, — my reiterated attempts to impart a single ray of understanding."

"Well! she is very harmless, poor thing," said Mrs. Grenville.

"Yes, — that is all, my dear mother, that even your comprehensive benevolence can suggest; — and as she is something like the old man of the sea in Sinbad, not to be got rid of, we must try to solace ourselves with the recollection of this negative quality: — she certainly is very harmless."

CHAP. XLV.

" Two lovers by the maiden sate,
Without a glance of jealous hate;
The maid her lovers sate between,
With open brow and equal mien."

ROKEBY.

GERARD, notwithstanding the resolutions he had formed, insensibly relapsed into intimacy at the Priory. — Percy appropriated his cousin Helen, so she was off his hands. — Mr. Mortimer resumed his pastoral staff, and busy with the rich and poor, — young and old of his parish, with his books and his garden, — left Gerard sufficiently at leisure to fall still more deeply in love.

Lovers are fertile in expedients, and Gerard's ingenuity did not fail him: — he had always some interesting discussion to renew, — some interesting book to talk over, — some poetical gem to introduce to the notice and admiration of Constance and her mother.

" Have you seen these beautiful lines by Mrs. Hemans?" said he, as he entered the

room one morning : — " I have just met with them, and could not be content to keep so delightful a banquet to myself another half hour."

He took a chair near that of Constance, and began reading with all the enthusiasm of taste and feeling those exquisite lines, entitled — " The Voice of Spring."

" Not a word more," said Mrs. Grenville, interrupting him : — " you have walked too fast, — you must recover your breath ; — so be content to listen : — give the book to Constance, and rest quietly on the sofa."

Constance took the book from him with peremptory playfulness.

Gerard, — his eyes riveted on her face, his ear drinking in her melodious tones, — enjoyed the exquisite gratification of listening to refined sentiment, and beautiful imagery, from the lips of her he loved.

" How delightful ! " exclaimed Constance, as she paused at the end of the second stanza : — " how spirited and delicate ! We see the primroses bursting in the woods, — we feel the balmy breath of spring, and see her bright, glad smile diffusing life and beauty : " she then resumed the page.

At this moment Sir Henry walked in: — he had paused a few moments at the door till the stanza was finished; and as he entered, Gerard slowly withdrew his eyes from the face of Constance, — but an expression of deep and fervent tenderness remained.

"I interrupt you, I fear," said Sir Henry; "pray go on, or I shall feel an intruder."

Constance bowed, and resumed her occupation, while Gerard again fixed his eyes intently on her face.

Sir Henry watched him with silent and painful interest.

"Thank you," said he, as she closed the book: — "it is indeed extremely beautiful."

"But you did not hear the first and second stanza," said Gerard: — "we must not cheat you of this pleasure:" — he took the book from Constance and recommenced the poem.

"You must not read, indeed," said Constance, after he had finished a line or two of the first stanza: — "we must bring you to confession: — do you not feel it to be an exertion?"

"When you condescend to issue commands, who can disobey them?" said Gerard, returning the book with a look of grateful pleasure.

" *You* will indulge us, perhaps," said Sir Henry, addressing Constance.

She read the stanzas; — but the words fell like an unmeaning sound on his ear: — his mind and heart were painfully occupied, and he only bowed when Constance ceased reading.

" There is no modern poetry which I enjoy more than that of Mrs. Hemans," observed Gerard; — " it is so chaste, yet so original, — so full of beautiful imagery, poetical feeling, and just sentiment."

" Yes, I think we have some names in the present day," said Mrs. Grenville, " that may rescue our sex from the namby-pamby reputation of writing lady-like rhymes: — what can be more beautiful, for instance, than the poetry of Joanna Baillie? — such felicity, both of thought and expression!"

" When genius is enshrined in a female mind," observed Gerard, " it is often invested with an atmosphere of purity, which adds an inexpressible charm to its attractions."

But, upon the whole, you think that among the gifts bestowed upon woman genius is not very often included," said Constance.

"It is not often dispensed to man," said Sir Henry, forcing himself, by a painful effort, to take part in the conversation.

"Still more rarely, perhaps, to woman," added Mrs. Grenville; "for I must confess that the brightest wreaths Fame has to bestow, as it respects literature and the arts and sciences, never yet encircled a female brow: — we can boast no Shakspeare, — no Milton or Newton, — no Titian or Raphael, — no Handel or Mozart; — certainly, in the very highest department of intellect, we must yield the palm to man."

"But the question of the intellectual equality of the sexes cannot be fairly decided," replied Gerard, "until the education of woman is as solid and complete as our own: — we know not what the female intellect would be, if it were trained, and drilled, and disciplined like ours."

"Oh, I am afraid," said Constance, "that with such learned lore we should feel something like a dwarf who had ambitiously possessed himself of a giant's armour, — rather encumbered than enriched."

"We do not wish to see you thus encumbered," said Sir Henry: "we are content that you should be just what you are. — The race-horse, with its delicate symmetry and elegant movements, is a beautiful creature; — the strength and fire of the war-horse would but spoil it."

"I am not disposed to rate the capabilities of the female intellect much below our own," said Gerard: — "the sphere of observation that is open to woman is far more contracted than that which we enjoy: — she cannot, like us, contemplate every varied form and mode of life and character: — the *data* upon which she goes can never be so full and ample as that which we may possess; — and yet how much does she make of her limited resources! — how much is the literature of the present day indebted to the female mind!"

"We ought to make our best courtesy to you, as our champion," observed Constance: — "but still, as mamma says, woman does not reach the highest department of literature; — in her poetical flights, for instance, she rises swiftly and gracefully; but it requires a stronger wing, and a more piercing eye, to soar to the

sun himself, — to bask in his beams, and drink in his light. In prose, and even in the department of fiction, I should find it difficult to believe that any woman, however highly gifted, could write like Scott: — there is not the grasp and vigour that might make this possible."

"We must, at least, give you credit for humility," said Sir Henry: —"but, at any rate, the mind of woman is delightful in its way. The shrub may be a beautiful shrub, rich in sweets and flowers, though it can never be strong, towering, and majestic as the oak."

"I suppose," said Gerard, "we rarely see the experiment of what the human mind is really capable, fairly made: — the seductions of indolence on the one hand, and of pleasure on the other, consume so large a portion of life, that, perhaps, we can yet scarcely calculate the capacity and capabilities of the mind of man."

"I suspect," observed Mrs. Grenville, "that Mr. Gerard Mortimer is rather imprudently anxious to make that experiment in his own person."

"Yes," added Constance, with a smile, — "a visit to the Castle of Indolence, — a little

listening to the melody of its most enchanting wizard, — might be safely prescribed."

Sir Henry envied Gerard the look of gentle interest which accompanied this observation.

"Perhaps," said he, addressing him, "you think with Dr. Johnson, that the mind attains a stationary point before the middle of life, from whence it can never advance; and you are anxious to enrich it with accumulated stores before that time."

"I should rather hope," returned Gerard, "that, unless clogged and impeded by physical infirmities, it would go on expanding and improving. Dr. Johnson himself furnishes an instance that great vigour of mind may be retained to an advanced age; and if the intellect be vigorous, why should not practice and experience contribute to its improvement? Did not Sophocles compose his Œdipus at ninety years of age? and surely all the characteristics of his genius appear in that admirable tragedy."

"Charming encouragement for the lazy!" said Constance: — "we may afford, now and then, to take a nap, with such a space and scope before us."

"Oh, never, never!" exclaimed Gerard, with energy: — "because our 'sun may go down while it is yet day.' I have sometimes such a vivid consciousness of the rapidity of time, that not to make the most of it, in the way of intellectual and spiritual improvement, seems absolute madness."

"And so you lengthen out the day by borrowing of the night," said Mrs. Grenville: — "take care that nature does not take her revenge, and compel you to borrow of the day some time or other."

"Are you not sometimes under the influence of the intense consciousness of which I speak?" said Gerard, looking with fond interest at Constance.

"Yes," returned she, "I know what you mean; — but these moments are with me, like the lightning's flash, bright and transient."

"They are moments," added Mrs. Grenville, "in which our sense of responsibility, and our desire of usefulness, seem inconceivably quickened."

"Yes, — and how much we intend to do, and to be, in such moments," said Constance.

"If we could but always *act*, as we sometimes *think*, as Elizabeth Smith says. — But, alas, alas!" said Sir Henry, "torpor steals over us again, and we are just what we were before."

"No, no, — we are the better for such moments, I hope," said Gerard: — "the impetus is not wholly lost: — it ought not to be; for our good angel is then at work: — and it is hazardous to wrestle with a spirit mightier than our own."

Gerard's countenance wore an expression of strong feeling.

Sir Henry rose to take leave, and pursued his way to the woods which skirted the park, there to indulge in his solitary musings. The fallen leaves rustled to his tread, and the wind moaning through the branches made melancholy music.

"He loves her," said he, — "fondly loves her, — and he is not unworthy to possess such a treasure: — a purer spirit, a finer mind than Gerard's, was never enshrined in human form! — and she loves him: — that soft, gentle manner, that winning smile, speak volumes."

A pang shot through the heart of Sir Henry. At that moment how gladly would he have ex-

changed his lot for Gerard's: — how willingly would he have sacrificed his broad lands and noble woods, his wealth and influence. Never did they appear so utterly worthless in his eyes, — never had he been so thoroughly convinced, that "all is vanity and vexation of spirit:" — he was quite in a mood to say, —

> "Hence all ye vain delights,
> As short as are the nights
> Wherein you spend your folly;
> There's nought in this life sweet,
> If men were wise to see it,
> But only melancholy!
> Nothing so dainty sweet, as lovely melancholy!"

"But he is worthy of her," resumed Sir Henry, — "and they will be happy." It was with a feeling inexpressibly bitter, however, that he thought of this happiness: — in vain he chided and schooled himself: — though he could cordially have rejoiced in the happiness of either, — this blending of names, this union of interests, was not to be contemplated without a keen pang. He condemned himself as utterly despicable, — as insufferably selfish; — but yet the feeling lost nothing of its intensity. It should not, however, be indulged: — he would combat

and conquer it: — he would not, like the fiend that gazed upon the bower of bliss in paradise, envy and hate those whose felicity he could not taste: — he would call up a nobler spirit, — he would cherish a higher feeling, — he would, if possible, promote and increase their happiness. His eye brightened, and his cheek glowed at the thought: — he trod with a firmer and more vigorous step. Yes, — his influence should be exerted for Gerard; and Constance should, at least, have reason to number him among her kindest and most devoted friends.

CHAP. XLVI.

" For days, for months, devotedly
I've linger'd by her side;
The only place I coveted
Of all the world so wide;
And in the exile of an hour
I consolation found,
Where her most frequent wanderings
Had mark'd it holy ground."

" There 's not an accent of that tender voice,
There's not a day-beam of those sun-bright eyes,
Nor passing smile, nor melancholy grace,
Nor thought half utter'd — feeling half betray'd,
Nor glance of kindness; no, nor gentlest touch
Of that dear hand, in amity extended,
That e'er was lost to me; that treasured well,
And oft recall'd, dwells not upon my soul,
Like sweetest music heard at summer's eve.

Even *such* thou art to *me;* — and thus I sit,
And feel the harmony that round thee lives,
And breathes from every feature; thus I sit;
And when most quiet, cold, or silent, then,
Even then, I feel each word, each look, each tone."

DIARY OF AN ENNUYÉE.

FULL of his generous project, Sir Henry resolved to cultivate an increased intimacy with Gerard, and to invite him to confidence. Cir-

cumstances favoured his intentions, for Gerard was suffering so much from cold and cough, that Mr. Mortimer earnestly requested him to confine himself to the house for a week or two. Gerard remonstrated against it as very superfluous caution, and was evidently restless under the arrangement: — he seemed glad, however, to escape from the lively rattle of Helen, and to shut himself up in his study; — and there Sir Henry often claimed the privilege of a quiet *tête-à-tête* with him.

The mind and heart of Gerard, as they unfolded to him in these hours of privacy, did more than win his admiration, — they secured his friendship. It was impossible not to reverence the high principle which could control and regulate feelings, naturally of the most fervid and ardent character.

One bright frosty morning, Sir Henry paid his accustomed visit: — the sun shone with sparkling clearness; every leaf was gemmed, and nature, though in her wintry garb, was dazzling in brightness.

"It seems a most exhilarating morning," observed Gerard: — "surely, while the sun is so perfectly cloudless, I might venture out."

" What! with the wind due east?" returned Sir Henry. — " Pray remember, that if you break bounds, no friend will bid you welcome."

" Yes, but even a scolding from some friends is worth having," said Gerard.

" It might be gratifying to receive, but not quite wise to deserve it," observed Sir Henry. — " Come, do not flutter against the bars of your cage, and bemoan that, like the starling, you ' can't get out ;' — but tell me what friends are those from whom it would be so delightful to receive a scolding, — they must, of course, be something very superlative."

" They are any thing but common-place, indeed," replied Gerard, colouring.

" May I be permitted to guess their name and degree?" asked Sir Henry.

" You need not much of a diviner's spirit for such a task," replied Gerard: — " a temporary suspension of intercourse with the inhabitants of Elton in general, might certainly be endured with considerable philosophy."

" I am to conclude, then," returned Sir Henry, " that there is one spot in the village that is

" ' A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest.' "

" Dearer ! " exclaimed Gerard, thrown off his guard by the impulsive feeling of the moment; " dearer than words can express."

Sir Henry paused for half a minute after this confession, fearing that his voice might betray too much emotion, — while Gerard walked quickly up and down the room.

" When every thought, wish, hope, and feeling are blended with one object," observed Gerard; — he stopped abruptly: — " but why should I talk of myself or my feelings? — why should I obtrude my confidence on you?"

" Choose another word," said Sir Henry, endeavouring to speak with calmness; " or I shall think either that you do not understand the privileges of friendship, or that you are resolved to deny them to me : — I have for some time suspected the truth."

" Have I, then, so ill guarded my secret?" returned Gerard: — " can others " — again he paused.

" The world is occupied with its own affairs," said Sir Henry, " and may not heed those signs which reveal so much to the eye and mind of a friend; — a friend," — here the voice of Sir Henry became a little indistinct; — " a very sincere

friend to both parties may be expected to see somewhat clearer."

"But I am not thinking of the world," replied Gerard, hastily: — "upon that point I am utterly indifferent: — idle conjectures are less than nothing to me; — but can my feelings have betrayed themselves where it would be least justifiable, — where they must be deemed presumptuous? — I am not conscious that I ever breathed a word which could tell the tale of love and admiration with which my heart is full."

"*Words*," said Sir Henry, "are not always the essential vehicle of such a tale. The rose and its bud reveal it in the East, — and there is a silent devotedness, there are looks, which speak as distinctly and impressively."

"But I have no right to whisper such a tale," said Gerard: "it would be as unwarrantable as it would be useless:" — he walked up and down the room with a step still more rapid and agitated: — "hope would be presumption in this case," continued he: — "my obscure lot, — my humble expectations, — a curate without paternal fortune, — common sense and prudence would decide against me,

— and yet, if the most devoted tenderness, — an affection that seems entwined with every fibre and feeling ——— "

" I know not," said Sir Henry, interrupting him somewhat abruptly, — " I know not why you should take so dark a view of your prospects; — you are not without patronage in the church."

" My hopes in that quarter are very faint," replied Gerard; " and they are shared with hundreds whose claims and merits far exceed my own."

" There are persons who may be inclined to make a different estimate of these claims and merits," observed Sir Henry: — " I am not without influence, and all that I possess shall be immediately and perseveringly employed in your favour."

Gerard expressed, in animated language, his sense of Sir Henry's kindness: — Hope at that moment threw her sunny light over the future, and dressed it in brightness and beauty.

" The prospect opened by your kind exertion would certainly lessen the presumption, which must otherwise be imputed to me; — but can I flatter myself with a hope of success?"

said Gerard: — "the coronet of a duchess would look but in its place on that brow; — there is something so refined, — so distinguished in her style of beauty, — such noble simplicity of mind, — such utter incapability of littleness: — to be loved by Constance: — oh! no, it can never be: — why should a lot so delightful be mine?"

A minute or two elapsed before Sir Henry replied: — he was struggling with feelings that would not instantly be quelled. At length, in a tone somewhat low and subdued, he said, — "If manner may be considered an interpreter of feeling, I think you have no ground at all to despond: — that of Miss Grenville towards you, in my opinion, indicates a marked and unusual interest."

A deep flush crimsoned the cheek of Gerard, and mounted to his forehead, and his quivering lip and kindling eye betrayed the highest excitement of feeling.

"Take care, — take care what you do!" exclaimed he: —"you are making this world too precious to me:" — he paused: — "but forgive me," added he a moment after, as if some apology for his emotion was necessary: — "to

you all this must appear extravagant; — you, whose feelings towards Constance wear only the quiet character of friendship, will smile at my enthusiasm."

"We will talk over this some future day," said Sir Henry, rising hastily to take leave, and pressing Gerard's hand in his, — "at present it will do you good to be quiet and alone."

CHAP. XLVII.

" Hast thou not trod each vain and giddy maze,
By Flattery led o'er Pleasure's gayest field —
Bask'd in the sunshine of her brightest blaze,
And proved whate'er she can her votaries yield?

" Hast thou not tried the vanities of life,
And all the poor mean joys of Fashion known?
Blush, then, to hold with Wisdom longer strife;
Submit, at length, a better guide to own."

MRS. TIGHE.

" I HOPE you mean to be very much afflicted," said Helen, as she entered the Priory the next morning; " for this is a farewell visit. — I have received a summons from my father: — he is pining for my exhilarating presence; so I must leave the shades of Elton to complain, that their ' bright inhabitant is lost.' "

" Is your return quite indispensable?" asked Mrs. Grenville.

" Oh! absolutely," — returned Helen: — " we are to have a magnificent dinner party on Thursday, —

" ' And what's a table, richly spread,
Without a woman at its head?' "

and after that, a sort of *omnium gatherum* in the evening. — I must go to receive and dispense smiles and compliments."

"I wish Mr. Seymour could have spared you to us a little longer," said Constance.

"Yes, I hope you intend to miss me exceedingly," observed Helen.

"Can you doubt it?" asked Constance: — "we have more reason to think, that in the gay region to which you are going you will not return the compliment."

"Yes," said Helen, while a slightly pensive shade appeared on her countenance, "I shall often think of Elton: — the Rectory will be a sort of hallowed spot in my memory: — my uncle is really a delightful person in his way; and I assure you, I have too much taste not to think it a very good way as far as it respects him. — I dare say, the conversations I have had there, both with him and Gerard, will sometimes recur to me with a sort of startling effect. — There was a fervour, an earnestness in the blessings and prayers he breathed over me this morning really quite touching. — I was glad to run away, to hide my tears."

"You will not suffer them to be breathed in vain, I hope," said Mrs. Grenville, "affectionately taking her hand: — you will sometimes think of these things."

"Why, as to promising to think, my dear Mrs. Grenville," returned Helen, "her countenance resuming its usual playful expression, "that is not in my bond! — Why should you expect me to do that which the great majority of my fellow-creatures leave undone? — I assure you, the art of thinking is very imperfectly understood, and very rarely practised in my world."

"But as your world is not the only one for which you were created," — said Mrs. Grenville, in a pleading tone.

"Why, I have a certain sort of glimmering conviction upon that subject," said Helen, "and I sometimes wish I could stay quietly here, and learn to be very good, and proper, and all that; — but fate commands otherwise, — and I must fly off to a different region, and be very gay."

"And do you suppose that, wherever you may be, you stand excused from the duty of learning to be 'very good, and proper, and all

that?'" said Mrs. Grenville. — "Is there not a better part you are called upon to choose?"

"Why, I do not know: — circumstances seem to decide these affairs for us in a great measure," said Helen. — "Now Constance, sheltered, guided, and directed as she is, with Minerva and Ulysses at her elbow; if she is not a pattern-person, it will be passing strange; — but I am under very different auspices; — there is a sort of necessity for my saying,

"'Mirth, admit me of thy crew.'"

"Oh,. my dear, dear Helen, it is impossible you can cheat your own good understanding by such sophistry," said Mrs. Grenville.

"Well, I don't mean to listen to you a moment longer," said Helen. — "I shall grow as grave as a judge: — and my father will think the fairies have been at work, and palmed a changeling upon him: — besides, I have to practise my civilities this morning, and to say that touching word *good-bye* to the whole race of Eltonites. — What a martyr to politeness am I about to be! — I will just class them as they do in the drawing-room reports. — Mistresses

— Courtland, Somers, Murray, Jones, Bentley, Twyford: — Ladies—Lennox; — a sad numerical falling off here, indeed.—Sir Henry will sing Jubilate at my departure. — I have one of those impressions, which are in fact a kind of instinct, that he has taken a great dislike to me. — I have a great mind to marry Percy, if only to provoke him: — by-the-bye, I forgot my heart's delight, Miss Musgrave: — I would not miss the treat of her parting exordium against the pomps and vanities of this wicked world for any thing: — what would I not give to transport her on Thursday to our ball-room, — chalked floors, — gay lights, — and sweet flowers? — what a theme for her vituperative eloquence! — it is cruel to deprive her of such a banquet. — I am determined to fill up a card of invitation, and take it with me: — do give me one, dear Constance."

"I shall abet no such plots and stratagems," said Constance.

"Well, I must help myself then," said Helen, taking one from the card-rack, and filling up the back: — 'Cards and quadrilles — eleven o'clock.' — "To see her face will be too delightful! — Well, I must go," added she:

— "it is not at all easy to say good-bye here; and I shall quite dread it at the Rectory," — and again a slight shade stole over her countenance. — "I assure you, I am not at all happy about Gerard: — his cough is so bad, — he coughed, and walked about his room half the night. — To be sure, he is quite as fit, or rather more fit, for heaven than for earth; — but then my poor uncle, — and, indeed, notwithstanding my rattle, if any thing happened to Gerard it would make quite a dent in my heart; — and he is just like Kirke White, and the rest of those worthies, absurdly careless, thinking of nothing but mind, and soul, and spirit. — Do, my dear Mrs. Grenville, persuade him to take a little care of that crazy frame of his, which looks as if a puff of wind would lay it in ruins, — if it be only for his father's sake: — you are a prodigious favourite, Constance; — so pray use your influence."

"To the utmost," returned Constance: "we must be tasteless, indeed, not to appreciate Mr. Gerard Mortimer."

"And now," resumed Helen, "before I say that trying word, farewell, I have a petition to prefer, to which I hope my kind, good, dear

Mrs. Grenville will listen propitiously, — may I hope now and then to be indulged with a visit from Constance? — Why should not an acquaintanceship, from which I have derived so much pleasure, grow into friendship?"

Helen said this with feeling and grace. — "My dear Miss Seymour," replied Mrs. Grenville with mild decision, "the atmosphere you breathe appears to me full of danger and contagion; — should I then do right to expose Constance to its influence?"

"Oh! but she shall only be amused, not contaminated," returned Helen eagerly. — "I promise that she shall be in bed by three o'clock every morning, and that she shall go to church at least once on a Sunday."

Mrs. Grenville shook her head. — "Are these the fairest promises you can make to bribe me?" asked she.

"Well, — we will not go to the opera on Saturday night, nor to any Sunday galas, not even a concert; — will that satisfy you?"

"Not quite," said Mrs. Grenville with a smile: — "my notions of the value of time are somewhat stubborn and untractable."

"I see I must make an appeal to your gene-

rosity, then," pursued Helen: — "think of the good Constance might do me: will not such a plea be effectual?"

"The experiment, I fear, would be hazardous, and the result uncertain," said Mrs. Grenville mildly.

"Oh, you most impracticable person!" exclaimed Helen: — "you are resolved, then, to leave me to my fate. — Well, I must bid you farewell: — settle the matter as you can with your conscience."

Helen took her leave affectionately, and in perfect good humour; and as she caught a last glimpse of Constance, who stood at the window watching her retiring footsteps, held up the card for Miss Musgrave with an air of playful defiance.

"Poor thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Grenville: — "gay, happy, and engaging as she is, few persons, perhaps, would think Helen an object of pity, but I must look at her with compassion: — will the moment ever arrive, in which she will learn to think and feel?"

"Ah! if she were blessed with such a dear counsellor as I possess," said Constance, pressing her mother's hand affectionately, —

" she would soon learn to do both. I am sure she is quite right in her estimate of my advantages and duties : — it teaches me to think gravely of what I ought to be, and what I am."

" And such thoughts must be salutary," said Mrs. Grenville : — " for who can dwell upon such a theme without feeling excited to humility and vigilance ? "

" I suppose," observed Constance, after the pause of a few minutes, " I am at this moment under the influence of that vivid consciousness which Gerard Mortimer described so eloquently the other day."

" Very probably, — and you know you are to make the most of it," said Mrs. Grenville with a smile. — " I am very sorry," added she, " to hear so poor an account of him. To-morrow, after Helen is gone, we will walk to the Rectory and judge for ourselves."

CHAP. XLVIII.

" What! write in a book,
Where the learned may look,
Which the critic may con at his leisure?"
OLD ALBUM.

" SURELY, Caroline, you do not mean to refuse, — you cannot intend to deny yourself so rich a gratification?" said Percy to his sister.

" Yes, Percy, — I am sorry not to oblige you, but I cannot go. — Helen is extremely kind in wishing to see me in Portland Place, but I would not accept the invitation on any account."

" And pray why not?" asked Percy: — " if it were an every-day invitation, from every-day people, indeed, I should say nothing about it."

" Ah, but that is exactly my reason for not accepting it," returned Caroline: — " they are all so clever, and so witty, — and such talented people, that I should feel perfectly miserable among them; — I who never in my life said any thing the least worth hearing. — Oh, I should feel

just like a poor owl amidst the bright sunbeams."

"Nonsense," said Percy, laughing: — "you are quite clever enough, my dear child, if you would but fancy yourself so: — you pass muster vastly well, — besides, you are an excellent listener, and those clever people know the value of a listener, I assure you, — and you can play and sing delightfully, when you are not too frightened."

"Yes, here at home, to those I know and love; but there, in public, amidst crowds and critics, nothing would bribe me to attempt it," replied Caroline.

"Really those shy, timid birds," added Percy, "that start and flutter when any one approaches them, form a very pretty variety in the menagerie of society, — and they are somewhat rare, too, my dear."

"Oh, pray let them stay in their own native woods, then, — in the shades where they were reared," said Caroline: — "that is the only happy place for them."

"Well, I shall be quite provoked and disappointed if you refuse," said Percy. — "Perhaps I am quite mistaken, and you are really

afraid of being eclipsed by the radiant beauty of Helen, absolutely hidden by the veil of her splendour.

> " ' Ye meaner beauties of the sky,
> What are ye when the sun is nigh? ' "

" Hidden, — no, no, — that is just what I like to be," said Caroline.

" Well, then, do reconsider the matter, and let me have the honour and pleasure of conducting you to Portland Place."

" Oh, no; — I am sure I shall never alter my intention," replied she: — " besides I have another very excellent, — very particular reason for not accepting the invitation."

" I have heard nothing like one reason yet," said Percy; — " so pray do not use the term another; — but what is this *one* excellent reason which is to bring conviction to my understanding?"

" You will only laugh when you hear it," said Caroline.

" Very probably," continued Percy; " and as I like to laugh, do pray indulge me as soon as possible."

" Why, I understand that the Seymours

have a great Album, in which every body is expected to write, — to write poetry," added Caroline, with a terrified look: — "no, nothing shall ever persuade me to enter that house; — for no one can tell what I should suffer only from the anticipation of that horrid Album!"

"Poor little thing," said Percy, laughing heartily, "you are something in Benedict's case, — you were not born under a rhyming planet; — but take comfort, my dear: — there is a prodigious deal of nonsense extant in the Album way, — a little more or less would be of no consequence, — for my own part, I think they ought to be put down by act of parliament; — they are growing into a nuisance, — quite a national grievance: — I have five upon my hands at this very moment."

"Ah, *you!* but then you *can write*, — you can always find something to say about beaming eyes, and sunny smiles, and fragrant flowers, and those sort of things; — now I could not write four lines of poetry if my life depended upon it," said Caroline.

"Oh, there you are mistaken, my dear: — the stimulus of necessity has a force that you

cannot, at present, estimate: it would call out your latent powers."

"Ah, but I have no latent powers," returned Caroline: "it could not impart capacity: — I should be stunned, and bewildered, and that is all: — no, I am quite resolved, — never will I encounter that Album!"

"A charming reason for giving up such friends," said Percy.

"If it is not a reason, it is a feeling," replied Caroline, "and that is quite as powerful."

"Well, take your own course, I will waste no more persuasion upon you," said Percy, as he left the room; — "for who can reason away a feeling? — you may as well attack a shadow with a battering ram."

CHAP. XLIX.

"Oh let me love thee! thou hast pass'd
Into my inmost heart;
A dweller on the hallow'd ground
Of its least worldly part;
Where feelings and where memories dwell,
Like hidden music in the shell."

L. E. L.

"But if fond love thy heart can gain,
I never broke a vow;
Nae maiden lays her skaith to me,
I never loved but you.
Then tell me how to woo thee, love;
O tell me how to woo!"

MINSTRELSY OF THE SCOTTISH BORDER.

AGAIN and again Sir Henry was closeted with Gerard; and he soon perceived that under his present state of mental excitement no improvement in his bodily health could be looked for. The struggles of suppressed feeling,—the alternations of hope and fear,—stimulated every hectic symptom; and Sir Henry urged him to make an immediate disclosure of his feelings to his father.

Mr. Mortimer listened to the little history with deep interest, but without much surprise.

That his favourite, Constance, should have awakened such a sentiment appeared to him the most natural thing in the world, — nor was he much disposed to think that Gerard could love in vain. The subject of ways and means, indeed, appeared to present some obstacles; but with that entire forgetfulness of self, which was become a habit of his nature, he immediately began considering by what personal sacrifices these obstacles might be removed.

Not for a moment would Gerard listen to such proposals. The promise of Sir Henry, he said, was quite sufficient; for he had full reliance on the promptness and energy of his exertions, and little doubt that they would be effectual at no very distant period.

This explanation afforded inexpressible relief to Mr. Mortimer's mind. He now began to attribute great part of the excitation which had given him so much uneasiness more to the state of Gerard's feelings than to that of his frame; and he indulged a hope that the smiles of Constance would be full of healing power.

Intent upon breaking the ice for him, he betook himself to the Priory, and had a long conference with Mrs. Grenville. Nothing could be

more encouraging than her conjectures; for though conjecture was all that could be hazarded, yet she talked of esteem, approbation, and even of admiration, and this had a promising sound.

Mr. Mortimer, in detailing his son's expectations and prospects, dwelt upon the generous friendship of Sir Henry, and the warm interest he took in the affair; and Mrs. Grenville assured him that as far as pecuniary arrangements were concerned, competence would satisfy her own wishes and those of Constance; — but she hinted, though delicately, — for it was a father's ear to which she whispered her fears, — that she had some apprehensions on the subject of health. Mr. Mortimer acknowledged that his own fears had been serious till the state of Gerard's feelings was disclosed; but that he now saw much to hope, for though his son certainly was not free from symptoms of pulmonary disease, yet the agitation of his spirits accounted for much of the restlessness which excited the chief alarm.

During the evening of the day on which this interview had taken place, as Constance and Mrs. Grenville were enjoying the fire-side *tête-*

à-tête, she opened the subject, by observing, that while Constance was taking her morning walk, she had had a long interview with Mr. Mortimer.

" I am sorry I was from home," said Constance: —" a long interview with Mr. Mortimer is always good both for head and heart."

" This was peculiarly interesting," observed Mrs. Grenville.

" Indeed! — did he then confide to you his fears on the subject of Gerard's health?" enquired Constance. — " United as Mr. Mortimer and his son are, not only by principle but by feeling and taste, even the idea of remote danger, as connected with such a son, must be inexpressibly trying."

" He did allude to Gerard's health, certainly," replied Mrs. Grenville: — " but this did not form the most interesting part of our conference."

" You speak mysteriously, my dear mother," said Constance, smiling; — " and this is just the evening for a tale of interest: — the wind howling round us, the snow beating against the windows, the fire blazing so cheerfully,—nothing can be more propitious. Pray begin: — I am all attention."

But Mrs. Grenville did not immediately comply with this request: — she still paused, — and Constance was struck by the emotion which her countenance discovered.

" The subject," she at length observed, " is of the deepest interest to me; for it is one in which my beloved Constance is intimately concerned."

A thousand vague hopes and fears were instantly awakened in the bosom of Constance. — What could it be? — Was Sir Henry in any way connected with the question? — This was her first thought. But, no, — it was improbable,— highly improbable, — and she could only entreat Mrs. Grenville to proceed.

" You think highly of Gerard Mortimer, I believe, my love," said Mrs. Grenville.

" Very highly, indeed," replied Constance, with a fluttering heart.

" His principles and talents are of the highest order," observed Mrs. Grenville, " and his disposition singularly amiable!"

" Nothing can be more just than this praise," returned Constance: — " I scarcely know any one so admirable."

"There is some mysterious sympathy in the case, perhaps," said Mrs. Grenville; — "for he has formed very much the same opinion of you, my dear child."

"Oh, no, my dear mother, you are mistaken: — he knows very well that I have a great many faults, and has often pointed them out to me."

"He is willing, nevertheless, to take the trouble of correcting these faults entirely off my hands: — he is willing——" Mrs. Grenville looked at her daughter, whose flushed cheek and quivering lip betrayed increasing emotion. The truth seemed to break upon her mind, and to produce extreme agitation.

"I had so little idea!" exclaimed she in a tone of embarrassment: —"so little suspicion!"

"Indeed!" replied Mrs. Grenville: — "I confess you surprise me. His preference appeared to me sufficiently obvious."

"That he sought our society was obvious," said Constance: — "but I am sure I thought he enjoyed yours quite as much as mine."

Mrs. Grenville smiled. — "And that I enjoyed his quite as much as you appeared to do," continued she, with arch emphasis.

"My dearest mother," said Constance, with increasing agitation, "do you think my manner expressed any thing more than — than the sort of interest which such a young man as Gerard is likely to excite?"

"The *sort of interest*, my love," echoed Mrs. Grenville, — "can any thing be more indefinite than such a term? — that he awakened no common interest, was, I think, clearly indicated by your manner."

Constance turned pale, and a tear trembled in her eye.

"I have seldom seen you so invariably cordial, — I had almost said so peculiarly winning," — said Mrs. Grenville: — "I have often felt the contrast of your manner towards Gerard and Sir Henry, and drawn my own inferences."

The deepest flush crimsoned the cheeks of Constance, and a pause ensued: — "I never thought of Gerard," said she, with hesitation, as of one who would dream of love: — "I thought that he was absorbed in the pursuit of theology and literature, and that with his delicate health, and undefined prospects, he would not think of marrying for years to come."

" With respect to his prospects," replied Mrs. Grenville, " it seems that his friend, Sir Henry, has facilitated the accomplishment of his wishes, by promising to use his utmost exertions in the way of preferment."

The rapid changes in the complexion of Constance became every moment more obvious; — she turned red and white, and white and red, half-a-dozen times in a minute, and not daring to trust her voice, remained silent.

" Mr. Mortimer is quite touched," continued Mrs. Grenville, " by the warm interest which Sir Henry takes in this affair."

Constance shook from head to foot, and at length, unable to control her emotion, burst into tears.

" My dear child," said Mrs. Grenville, in a soothing tone, and kissing her affectionately, — " do not agitate yourself: — this is quite a subject for consideration and reflection; — you are not called upon to decide hastily, and, least of all, to sacrifice your own wishes and feelings."

Constance said not a single word, but continued to weep : — she felt intensely miserable. The hope almost unconsciously fostered in her heart of hearts was at this moment rudely

crushed: — Sir Henry, far from having any desire to appropriate her to himself, was really anxious to transfer her to another. A cold blight seemed suddenly to have fallen on her heart; and the recollection of Gerard served only to increase her distress, — to have awakened hopes which could not be realised, — to have played with the warm and generous affections of such a heart, — perhaps to be considered by all, — by every body interested in the affair, — as a vain, heartless coquette, — it was too much: — could there exist a being so wretched as herself? She covered her face with both hands, and sobbed convulsively.

"My dearest Constance," said Mrs. Grenville, after a pause of some minutes, "if I have been mistaken in your sentiments, — if they are less favourable to Mr. Gerard Mortimer than I imagined ——"

"Less favourable!" exclaimed Constance, endeavouring to command her voice: — "he is a thousand times too excellent and delightful for me, — I esteem, respect, and admire him;" — "but," added she, in a voice so low and tremulous as to be inaudible to Mrs. Grenville, — "it is not Gerard Mortimer that I love, —

that is, I mean, whom I prefer, — whom I could prefer to all the world."

Mrs. Grenville cast an anxious and enquiring glance at her daughter. — "We will say no more upon this subject at present," said she, in the kindest and most soothing tone: — "you shall go to your own room and be quiet: — when you are disposed to renew it, you will find me, I hope, a faithful counsellor, and tender friend."

Constance could only fold her arms around her mother and weep; — till at length she retired to her own chamber, — to think and to be miserable.

CHAP. L.

" Yet all Matilda could she gave,
In pity to her gentle slave;
Friendship, esteem, and fair regard,
And praise — the poet's best reward:
She read the tales his taste approved,
And sung the lays he framed or loved."

ROKEBY.

ALAS! for Constance: — reflection seemed only to increase her perturbation and deepen her disquietude. — Hitherto the task of declining a proposal of marriage weighed neither upon her heart nor her conscience: — she had full confidence in the healing power of time on the hearts of men in general; — but her feelings towards Gerard wore a new, and very different character: — she reviewed her own conduct, and with the comment upon it which the result enabled her to make, could easily believe that her manner had been encouraging, — almost flattering. It had, indeed, expressed her genuine sentiments, when it told of approbation

and esteem; — but his was not the name that made her pulse flutter, and her heart tremble, — his was not the presence which deepened the glow of her cheek, and brightened her eye, — his was not the image that mingled in her daily and nightly dreams; — and Sir Henry, who did excite all this, was wholly indifferent: — the conviction was exquisitely painful, — self-blame, too, mingled with the feeling of wounded pride under which she was suffering; — an over-strained refinement, — a weak dread of misconstruction on the part of others, — had betrayed her into adopting a manner so cold, distant, and repelling, that it must have been deceptive.

In the society of Sir Henry, Constance had certainly often been seen *en masque;* — and now that this conduct had entangled her in conflicting difficulties, the motives which had induced it appeared inadequate and unjustifiable; — however, the die was cast: — Sir Henry was indifferent; and never should he, or any human being, guess the deep, fond, tender feeling that filled her heart: — she would at once cut it up by the roots; — the task would be difficult, but it should be done; — she would subdue a

preference which seemed now to degrade her in her own eyes: — long did she ruminate, and "chew the cud of sweet and bitter fancy." Her thoughts reverted to Gerard, — to his engaging qualities, and devoted tenderness: — his feelings formed a striking contrast to the indifference of Sir Henry. Oh! why was she doomed to inflict the pang she was at that instant suffering, upon such a heart as that of Gerard? — why should his peace be wrecked as well as her own? It should not be: — she would accept the homage of that pure devoted heart; — she would link her fate with his, and lose her sense of misery in the consciousness of imparting happiness. Her own dignity would be sustained, Gerard's happiness secured, and the sacrifice of her deep, tender woman's love be known only to God and to herself.

Under the influence of excitement Constance saw not the fallacy of her own reasoning, — she saw not that the proud sensitiveness of disappointed feeling was hurrying on her decision, and that this feeling could even be mistaken for high principle, and heroic self-sacrifice. Her conscience was, perhaps, at this moment, bribed by the virtues and fine qualities of Gerard: —

he was a person whom she entirely esteemed, and thoroughly respected; and if he did not inspire a deeper and dearer feeling, it was to be attributed rather to the caprice of the human heart than to any other cause. Under his vigilant guidance, every pious principle, habit, and feeling would be fostered.

To conceal the real state of her feelings was the most difficult point, and she was a little doubtful of success; for a mother's tenderness is quick-sighted and penetrating; — but she thought it due to Gerard, and essential to her mother's peace of mind, not to allow her secret to transpire.

The following morning, before she had left her room, Constance received a letter from Gerard, containing an explicit avowal of his sentiments, in language full of feeling and delicacy: — though it spoke most tenderly of his love, and with great diffidence of his hopes, yet its tone was manly and dignified, and its excellent taste she fully appreciated.

Constance begged to take breakfast in her own apartment, rather to conceal her agitation than for any purpose of deliberation, — for her resolution was already taken. In a few hours she

sought her mother's dressing-room; and with some flutter of manner, but in distinct and decisive language, avowed her favourable intentions towards Gerard. It was her object to escape discussion, to elude all minute enquiry, — she did not even ask Mrs. Grenville's consent; but anticipated it by saying, —

"Of your concurrence, — indeed, of your entire approbation, — I am quite certain, my dearest mother. Gerard's mind and principles are like your own, all beauty and excellence: — you will have no fears for your Constance under such guidance." — She placed her reply to Gerard's letter in her mother's hand, and kissing her tenderly, hurried out of the room.

This reply was sufficiently gentle and encouraging to kindle a glow of hope and gratitude in the heart of Gerard; and the privilege of addressing Constance as her lover, was communicated by him to Mr. Mortimer and Sir Henry with all the animation of joy.

To Sir Henry, it seemed to throw a still more cheerless hue over the future: — till that moment, a slight hope, or rather a doubt, had lurked about his heart: — without checking the generosity of his exertions, it had afforded a

sort of unsuspected solace. This had now failed; — the dream of bliss which he had once enjoyed was dissolved, — and for ever: — a few months would pass away, and Constance, in all human probability, would become the wife of Gerard. But the course of conduct dictated by honour, and regard to his own dignity, was sufficiently clear, and he again determined resolutely to conceal his feelings, and sedulously to promote the interest of his friend.

Mr. Mortimer had no drawback to his joyful sympathy in Gerard's happiness, except that which arose from some uneasiness respecting his health. He endeavoured, however, to dismiss the fear, and to banquet on the hope that his life might long be spared: — he had enjoyed few happier moments than that in which he had contemplated the bright, glad countenance of his son as he talked of his delightful hopes. If there be a source of human enjoyment pure and unalloyed, it is to be found in a father's feelings towards such a son. Nothing could be more fair than the vision which now presented itself to Mr. Mortimer: — it showed him Gerard in the exercise of all the tender charities of domestic life, enjoying and diffusing happiness

around his own hearth and home; — he saw his fine talents dedicated to the best of purposes, that of "turning many to righteousness;" and in the still brighter perspective that opened to him as a Christian, he beheld this dear son shining "as a star for ever and ever."

The spring of joy, of which Gerard had just tasted, acted like a charm upon his physical frame, — it appeared to have restored him to health and vigour; — no languor could now be traced, — his bright eye, and his firm elastic step, spoke of health and happiness. He was much at the Priory; and though the quiet, subdued manner of Constance discovered none of that lightness of heart and gaiety of feeling, which arises from overflowing happiness, yet it satisfied Gerard. What some would have deemed cold, he attributed to the delicacy of refined feelings; and grateful for the privilege he enjoyed, saw nothing to regret in the gentle and increased seriousness of her whole demeanour.

Mrs. Grenville, however, was too well acquainted with the manner and disposition of Constance, — too observant of their minutest shades and changes, — not to find food for an-

xious conjecture. The buoyancy of youthful feeling was gone, — the quick, lively repartee, the light step, the lighter laugh, so full of glee, no longer greeted her ear; — languor pervaded the movements of Constance; and the grave composure of her manner seemed rather the effect of restrained than satisfied feelings: — in her *tête-à-tête* moments, too, she was as unlike herself as possible,—there was no outpouring of the heart and affections, — she breathed not a word with respect to her hopes and prospects: — every subject was discussed except that which it was most natural and most interesting to talk over. Now and then, too, she would sit unconsciously in silent and melancholy abstraction; then suddenly, as if from some startling conviction, she would, with obvious effort, renew the conversation.

All this did not accord with the apparently smooth course of her happy love. Mrs. Grenville became still more observant, and she discovered that the delicate attentions, the unrepressed tenderness of Gerard, appeared occasionally to awaken something like painful emotion in the heart of Constance; — her eyes would fill with tears, and an expression, almost

amounting to sadness, steal over her countenance. Mrs. Grenville's perplexity increased; — still there was nothing sufficiently definite to be acted upon; and once or twice, when she had endeavoured to lead to the subject, Constance had dismissed it abruptly.

With the character and mind of Gerard, Mrs. Grenville was more and more pleased; — well, indeed, could they bear the test of minute scrutiny and daily observation, — all was harmonious and consistent: — no discrepancy was to be discovered between principle and practice, — nothing which disappointed the heart or the taste; — and Constance seemed alive to his excellence: — she did it ample justice, and appreciated it fully; — yet care sat on her brow, and heaviness at her heart.

Mrs. Grenville also observed that her daughter's intercourse with Mr. Mortimer had lost much of its ease and playfulness: — the kind, paternal tenderness of his manner seemed at once to excite her gratitude, and in some inexplicable way to distress her feelings: — her manner towards him was more respectful, more considerate, than ever: — she appeared more earnestly desirous of his approbation, more

anxious to be guided in all respects by his counsel; and yet an undefinable embarrassment occasionally pervaded her manner: — some internal struggle, some conflict, seemed to be working at her heart.

CHAP. LI.

"I know the gentleman to be of worth, and worthy estimation; and not without desert so well respected. And yet — I would you had said him, Nay."

SHAKSPEARE.

CAROLINE LENNOX heard of her friend's engagement with a deep and keen feeling of disappointment not unmingled with surprise: — it had dissolved many schemes of happiness in which she had delighted to indulge, — many castles in the air, which she had loved to build.

In spite of the general reserve that marked the manner of Constance towards Sir Henry, Caroline, whose devoted affection induced her to watch the feelings of her friend attentively, always flattered herself that her brother would not be rejected when the happy moment for disclosing his sentiments arrived; — to that moment she had hitherto looked forward with hope and confidence: — watchful of every expression that escaped him on the subject, she

had treasured up his approving words, seen his admiring looks, and though Sir Henry was generally guarded, yet enough of interest and approbation had escaped him to feed the hopes secretly fostered by Caroline. — Shy, retiring, and little interested in strangers, all the energies of an affectionate nature were concentrated in a few persons, who wholly engrossed her attention, and were the subjects of her quiet, but constant observation.

That Constance should really have accepted Gerard, even with all his admirable qualities, harmonised so little with the theory pre-established in her mind, that it appeared scarcely credible; and laying aside the timidity which generally prevented her adopting decided measures, she resolved to talk the matter over with Constance, and under the influence of this determination was soon on her way to the Priory; but ere she had reached the gate, a sense of the embarrassing nature of this intended appeal seemed to steal over her; and had not the gardener who was working near the spot advanced, hat in hand, and held open the gate to let her pass, her courage might have failed:

— the civility of William, however, decided the matter, and she walked forward.

Mrs. Grenville was not at home; and after seeking Constance in the lower rooms, Caroline, who was upon sufficiently familiar terms to have the privilege of the *grandes et petites entrées*, proceeded to her dressing-room.

It was the first time the young ladies had met since the decisive era in the destiny of Constance, — and each sought to conceal her embarrassment, by talking for some time as fast as possible on uninteresting subjects.

At length a pause ensued, which was broken by Caroline, who taking her friend's hand affectionately, said, " I did not come here to talk of these persons, about whom I do not care one pin; but of what is a thousand, and a thousand times more interesting, — yourself, dearest Constance."

Constance, who dreaded what might follow this exordium, endeavoured to conceal her emotion, and replied with as much composure as she could assume, " I knew with what kind interest you would think of me."

" Oh, I have thought of nothing else from

the moment it was mentioned to me; — but I can scarcely yet realize it: — can it be true, that I am to lose you, — that you will be taken perhaps a far — far way from me, — that you are really in love, and with Mr. Gerard Mortimer?"

"Is he not very loveable?" said Constance, willing to parry this home question.

"Oh, he is delightful, certainly," pursued Caroline: "but I did not think — I was not prepared for this."

"But I hope," said Constance, "now you do think, that you also approve."

"I am sure I wish with all my heart that he had never come to Elton," returned Caroline abruptly: — "I little thought the mischief he would do."

"Did you think, then, dear Caroline, that I had so much of the sober, austere demureness of a nun about me, that I should decide upon chaunting hymns to the pale, cold moon?" said Constance, endeavouring to assume some playfulness of manner.

"No, indeed," returned Caroline warmly: — "I was quite sure that you would be admired by

every body, — that every body would want to steal you away."

"And now you have transferred your displeasure from *every body* to *somebody*," said Constance.

"Well, I cannot help it," replied Caroline. "Every one may have their own secret thoughts, and I have had mine; — and I shall always have them," added she with emphasis.

Constance tried to appear easy and disengaged, but she felt the flutter of her heart fast increasing. — "Those secret thoughts are a *penetralia*, which no one is privileged to enter," said she; "nor would I venture to trespass on such private property."

This was not at all a desirable conclusion to Caroline: — she by no means wished to be left in undisturbed possession of her own secret wishes and conjectures; but Constance seemed determined to hazard no guesses.

"Of course, I thought — I expected — I knew you would marry," said Caroline: — "but only there was no occasion to leave Elton."

Constance felt her colour rising, and endeavoured to disguise her agitation under a laugh.

"You would, perhaps, have approved my marrying Mr. Mortimer," said she, "and playing the part of mamma to Gerard: — that would have been one mode of remaining at Elton."

"I am thinking of a very different person to Mr. Mortimer," said Caroline.

"Our smart new farmer, — young Smith?"

"Nonsense," ejaculated Caroline, somewhat pettishly.

"Why, he is quite a different person to Mr. Mortimer," returned Constance, who, dreading the expression of Caroline's wishes, tried to parry it, by assuming an air of gaiety. — "I really can think of no one else with whom I could contrive to sit down snugly at Elton."

"But *I* can think of somebody else," said Caroline; — "and, oh! what happiness for me! and how pleased mamma would have been! — and never, never would you have left Elton: — how delightful it would have been!"

Constance could no longer affect to misunderstand her friend, but a thousand conflicting feelings chained her tongue.

"I cannot bear to think that so delightful a hope is gone for ever," continued Caroline; —

" besides, you are so exactly suited, — so entirely made for each other."

" Caroline," said Constance, after a struggle of some moments, " to pretend to misunderstand you, would be mere affectation. — I know that these wishes arise from that warm affection and friendship which I shall always most highly prize. — Be assured that no circumstances can ever make you less dear to me: — we shall be sisters at least in affection."

" Ah, but I am so sorry for Henry," said Caroline.

" Pardon me," returned Constance, a glow of pride mantling her cheek: — " as Sir Henry is himself perfectly happy, this seems but an idle waste of feeling. — Do, pray, reserve your sympathy till his hollow cheek and sunken eye prove that he is pining for some cruel fair one."

" But I do not believe that he is perfectly happy: — I am sure it is impossible," said Caroline.

" It would be rash, perhaps, to pronounce upon the happiness of any human being, unless we could read their 'heart of hearts,'" said Constance: — " but certainly I am guiltless of

disturbing his felicity: — he wears not my colours in his cap, my image in his heart: — his sighs, if breathed at all, are not for me."

"Well, I shall always retain my own opinion," said Caroline pertinaciously: — "it is not at all altered: — no one shall persuade me that Henry is not attached to you, — that he does not admire you more than any person in the world."

"He has adopted a singular mode of proving his love," said Constance coldly. — "Consult your own common sense, my dear friend, and you must discover your mistake. — Sir Henry has done all in his power to promote the accomplishment of Gerard's wishes; — he has our union quite at heart; — he is endeavouring to remove every obstacle, — every impediment. — Is this like love, Caroline? — No, it is a mere dream of yours: — pray, awake from it as soon as possible."

Caroline burst into tears: — "but it is so painful to awaken from it," said she: — "would that I could dream again!"

"I really ought to be angry with you, Caroline; — what would Gerard say, if he could listen to these lamentations?" said Constance.

"I dare say he would dislike me very much; but what would my regrets signify to him? I am sure he is the happiest creature in the whole world. — I wonder where you will be taken to," continued Caroline, after a pause, and in a mournful tone; — "where he will think proper to fix his abode. — I dare say hundreds of miles off, in some little dull place. — Ah, the Manor House would have suited you a million times better: — you would have been just where you ought to be, — quite in your place there."

"Caroline, I must prohibit another word on this subject," said Constance, decidedly: — "such language now is neither kind nor right."

"Well, I will say no more; but I cannot promise not to think, — or not to feel sorry. — In time, perhaps, I shall become reconciled to it; but do not expect it now, for it is quite impossible."

"I am not going to run away yet," said Constance: — "there is no probability of my leaving Elton for a long time to come. — Another spring, summer, autumn, and winter, at any rate, will pass away, — possibly more."

"Ah, but the day will come at last," said Caroline: — "however, I will say no more about it; — and there is a ring at the bell, — I dare say it is Gerard: — pray let me hide myself, for I do not at all wish to see him."

"He will not intrude upon us here, at any rate," said Constance.

"But I had better go," said Caroline, rising hastily: — "I can steal away through the shrubbery, without being seen."

She took leave, — and left Constance to her own reflections.

CHAP. LII.

" A marriage? — Yes, the fact's undoubted.
A poor affair — merely a man of worth."
VILLAGE GOSSIP.

" Not caring for the world a button,
You brew your beer, and kill your mutton;
Receive returns of hens and cocks,
Put corn and duck eggs under locks;
Prove that your talent's not mistaken
In matters relative to bacon;
And take the wisdom of the village
On last year's frost, and next year's tillage.

" Preserve me from the shapes that stalk,
In memory, round a village walk;
The Doctor, with his last year's news,
Tithes, turnpikes, politics, and pews;
Death's deputy, the Esculapius,
Telling who last has got his *capias*."
MAY FAIR.

Two months sped away, and the engagement began to be whispered in the village, — and its propriety to be canvassed in its various coteries.

The arrangement, upon the whole, was satisfactory to the Elton public: — it was not sufficiently brilliant to awaken envy; and there

was nothing of incongruity or imprudence to provoke censure.

Some were agreeably surprised: — they had reluctantly prognosticated a more brilliant lot for Constance; and were by no means disappointed by the failure of their own predictions.

Mrs. Somers and Mrs. Courtland, indeed, exchanged regrets. — Mrs. Somers pronouncing Constance to be fit for a duke, and Mrs. Courtland acknowledging, in a confidential whisper, that she thought her wasted on a country curate.

"She has certainly style enough for any station," said she: — "Mr. Gerard Mortimer, to be sure, is an excellent young man; and that is the chief thing; — but, after all, there are other considerations, and I confess I am sorry for Mrs. Grenville: — I think she must feel it."

Relations and friends talked of it as a settled thing: — from Edward it had produced the following rattling letter, —

"*To Miss Grenville.*

"And so, my dear Constance, you have been mischievous enough to destroy with a

breath my castles in the air; — my splendid, brilliant, beautiful castles: — instead of making my bow to you as queen and mistress of certain ancient halls, and wide domains, you are to be transformed into that quiet, demure, respectable kind of nobody, — *a parson's wife!* — what a cruel metamorphosis! — I assure you, I take it to heart amazingly: — you have disappointed my hopes, and falsified my prophecies; — you were certainly made for better things, and had the game in your own hands.

" ' There is a tide in the affairs of men,
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune.'

But, alas! alas! my sweet Mrs. Primrose elect, the happy moment is passed: — you have decided upon concocting gooseberry wine, rearing poultry, darning stockings, catechising brats, and hearing sermons.

" We have different notions of the elements of felicity. — I confess the happiness of dull obscurity, that chimney-corner happiness, which sits gaping and yawning by its own fire-side, is not at all to my taste. — The world is all before us, and why should we take up a position which unavoidably narrows the bounds

of our horizon: — it is better to mount, — to take high ground, my dear child; — and I flattered myself, that you had rather that turn.

"I owe this Gerard Mortimer a sad grudge, for his skilful manœuvres: — I do not forgive him for spreading his snares, and entangling my bird of paradise, when a red-breast might have suited his turn as well; and would have fitted his nest far better.

"Sir Henry is a noble fellow. — I have had private, personal experience upon that point: — he ought to have been the hero of the piece. — I really believe, either that you have cheated him, or that he has unwittingly cheated himself; and that, altogether, there has been some strange play at cross-purposes.

"I have not a doubt, however, that Gerard and I shall be upon the best possible terms: — happily we are so entirely, so thoroughly contrasted, that we can never annoy each other: — our roads are so different, that we cannot contrive to jostle. — Persons who assimilate in some respects, and do not harmonise in all, get into endless squabbles: — they fancy it is so easy to convince each other; — now in our case the thing is already settled: — he

will never turn me into a Methodist, nor shall I turn him into a man of the world: — he will shake his head at me, and I shall laugh at him; — so we shall do vastly well together.

" What will Elton do, when

> " ' The beauty and brag of the parish
> Is wooed, and married away? '

Do? — ' The lovers grow meagre as shadows,' in anticipation of the impending stroke: — but you have no sympathy to spare for them: — no, no; love is but a selfish sort of feeling after all. — Friendship is the thing, — sublime, disinterested friendship! — I shall sport that opinion in my next letter to Jessy, — my Jessy, — the soft, the sweet, the susceptible. — Well, the longest farce, you know, will have an end, — the curtain will fall at last: — but it will be as well to close with *eternal friendship*, — it sounds as well, and means about as much as *eternal love*.

" Pray whisper to your *pastor fido*, that I think him a person of excellent taste; — rather officious and intrusive, — but let that pass: — say to my mother, that I am her devoted and dutiful son; — and to yourself, that I am,

in spite of your unnatural preference of a humdrum lot,

"Ever affectionately yours,

"E. GRENVILLE."

Constance did not as usual transfer this letter to Mrs. Grenville, but silently committed it to the flames, watching with a musing, meditating eye, the disappearance of the brilliant sparks, till all were extinct. — She had been so absorbed in this occupation, that she had not heard the approach of footsteps; — and was roused from her deep reverie by the greetings of Sir Henry.

It was with a start of surprise, and glow of confusion, that she bade him welcome, nor was *his* manner free from embarrassment: — he had not expected to find Constance alone, and a silence of some moments succeeded. — Sir Henry was the first to recover himself.

"I have received intelligence this morning," said he, "of so pleasant a nature, that it ought not to be a moment withheld: — my friend Lord —— has taken the opportunity of gratifying himself, and of doing the parish of Oakfield

the greatest possible service, by presenting the living to a very dear friend of ours."

Sir Henry paused: — but no word of acknowledgment could Constance utter: — she turned as pale as death: — a strange oppression seemed to weigh upon her heart, and at length a few tears stole down her cheeks.

"I would not communicate these tidings to Gerard," said Sir Henry, without appearing to notice her emotion, — "because I knew the pleasure of hearing the news from you would give it double zest."

Still Constance was silent: — the power of expression seemed most cruelly to have deserted her;—but her countenance was eloquent enough; — it was strangely agitated.

"I have performed my commission very awkwardly, — very abruptly, I fear," said Sir Henry, looking at her with an interest not unmixed with surprise. — "Pardon me, I was not aware, — I did not anticipate."

"You have fulfilled it most kindly," said Constance, interrupting him, and making a strong effort to rally. — "I have lost the power of expression, but not of feeling: — he for

whom your exertions have been so promptly and generously made, will, I hope, find both."

Sir Henry took the hand of Constance, and pressing it warmly between both his, breathed a fervent wish for her happiness, and then hastily took his leave.

CHAP. LIII.

—— " Yet something o'er her look
Of mournfulness was spread."

" Is not this all a mystery ? — Who shall say
Whence are those thoughts, and whither tends their way ? "
MRS. HEMANS.

As he returned home, Sir Henry mused with deep interest upon the looks and manner of Constance; — enough of feeling, indeed, she had betrayed, — deep agitated feeling: — but no beam of joy had lighted up her expressive countenance, no thrill of pleasure had appeared to glow at her heart. — He tried to analyse the matter, but his perplexity increased: — it was strange, — passing strange! Some peculiar, some undefinable feeling blended with her attachment to Gerard, and threw a shade over the future: — what could it be? His curiosity was excited, — his anxiety awakened. — Hitherto since her engagement he had kept aloof whenever it had been practicable, — now he resolved

to adopt a different plan, — and yet was it right to exercise such vigilance as he proposed? Alas! the happiness of Constance was not in his keeping: — betrothed to another, — the affianced wife of his friend, — what could she be to him? Yet was that happiness most dear to him, — not even to Gerard, whose blessed lot it would be to guard the treasure, could it be more precious. — Surely as a privileged friend he might be permitted to watch over her feelings and interests.

While such thoughts were passing in the mind of Sir Henry, those of Constance too were busy: — she was enduring the more bitter feelings of self-condemnation. — She had just received tidings which ought to have been music to her ear and heart. — Who should rejoice like herself in the happiness of Gerard? — How often had he dwelt in the rapture of fond anticipation even upon the distant hope of such an event! — Surely, surely she did rejoice. — She would think of Gerard's countenance radiant with joy; — of Mr. Mortimer's sweet, satisfied smile: — could she not at least reflect this gladness? Alas! tears were streaming from her eyes: — a sense of wretchedness

oppressed her. — Was she not playing an unworthy and deceptive part? — Did Gerard, the pure, high-minded, devoted Gerard, deserve the meed only of sisterly regard — of approving friendship? — if he could at this moment read her heart, would he not reject it as wholly unworthy of his own? It seemed her fate to treat with injustice those in whom she was most interested. — Once she had been most unjust towards Sir Henry: — alas! he was not now the person against whom she erred: — not one of his delightful qualities was forgotten, — her heart did unwilling homage to them, — her memory was busy with their record. — As a consciousness of this stole over her mind, a burning blush covered her face: — she felt guilty and degraded, — odious in her own eyes, — a hypocrite towards her confiding lover, — yet she had gone much too far to recede: — to control and conceal her feelings appeared now the only honourable course; but Constance was little fitted to wear disguise gracefully, or with success. — She dreaded the well known sound of Gerard's footstep, and the gentle tones of his voice. — She knew with what grateful, overflowing delight the tidings which she had to

communicate would be received. — She knew what sweet visions of domestic happiness would arise before him, — his undeserved tenderness would keenly reproach her.

The dreaded moment came that realized these anticipations. — Gerard heard the intelligence with just the glow of feeling which she expected: — nothing could be more animated than his gratitude, — more fervent than his tenderness; — and all this was blended with a deep sense of his responsibility as a pastor, — with a holy desire to approve himself both to God and man. — Never had her lover so thoroughly commanded her respect as at this moment; — never had she felt so deeply his claim to her undivided affection: — this consciousness mingling with self-upbraiding threw a constraint over her manner which awakened, for the first time, a sense of disappointment in the mind of Gerard. — Surely a little more fervour of sympathy, — a little more of the gladness of a rejoicing spirit, — might have discovered itself without any diminution of the sweet, refined delicacy which he so much admired. — Could so brilliant a feeling as joy be completely concealed? Would it not beam in

the eye? — would it not brighten the whole countenance? — and was there no joy excited in the bosom of Constance? — How little, then, did their hearts beat in unison! — still the idea was too painful to be dwelt upon, and he endeavoured to dismiss it. — The contrast of Mrs. Grenville's manner, however, struck him forcibly: — her cordial sympathy in his feelings, — the tears of grateful pleasure that filled her eyes, — the tender maternal kindness of her manner and expressions: — if Constance had said or looked half as much!

It was arranged that in a few days he should visit his new benefice, and ascertain all interesting particulars as to house, situation, neighbourhood, &c. &c. An expression of thoughtful gravity mixed with the tenderness of his manner as he bade Constance farewell: — it was an expression which at once touched her heart, and quickened the reproaches of her conscience; for she was aware that it had its source in secret but not groundless dissatisfaction.

If the happiness of Gerard were to be sacrificed as well as her own, what a web of misery had been woven by her rashness. This, however, should not be: — she would so discipline

her heart, so regulate her manner, that he should never again be wounded. But love, — the love of a sensitive and delicate spirit, — not only refines the invention, but inconceivably quickens the perceptions: — not a word, — not a look, — not a feeling of the endeared object, — escapes the observant eye: — the slightest shade that steals over the brow, — the tremour of a tone, — even silence itself, — will often tell an unwelcome tale.

Gerard endeavoured to reason away the impression he could not shake off: — he tried to convict himself of injustice towards Constance, — of ignorance of feminine manners and habits; — in short, he would have welcomed any thought but that which haunted him but too pertinaciously, — that the attachment of Constance was less decided and devoted than he once hoped.

CHAP. LIV.

—— "Oh, come not thus
With absent eyes, and alienated mien,
Suff'ring address, the victim of my love.
Oh, let me be undone the common way,
And have the common comfort to be pitied,
And not be ruined in the mask of bliss,
And so be envied, and be wretched too!
Love calls for love." YOUNG.

IT was not without agitation that Constance broke the seal of the following letter, announcing Gerard's arrival in Dorsetshire: —

"*To Miss Grenville.*

"I am afraid I should have exercised but little philosophy, my dearest Constance, had business of any other nature called me from you; for not even the lively feelings of gratitude that glowed in my heart, nor the interesting object of my journey, could charm away the pain of bidding you farewell, or teach me to forget that, in a few hours, hill, and vale, and stream, would separate us.

"You will easily imagine the nature of my feelings as I drew near the village of Oakfield, and my eye rested on the spire of the church: — that village was to be my home, — that church the scene of labours which might bear fruit in time and in eternity. The Rectory I found untenanted, for the late incumbent died unmarried: — with what emotion did I cross its threshold! — it would be the home which might one day welcome my beloved Constance, — where she would be cherished as the dearest of earthly treasures; — a home where love, and piety, and perfect confidence, would shed their delicious influence. And is this sweet hope to be realised? — Is Constance, indeed, contented to walk with me through the quiet vale of life? — Does no regret blend with her anticipations? — Has she never, for a moment, repented the consent which has invested me with the dear privilege of thus interrogating her? — Forgive these questions, dear Constance, and scold me if they spring from a sensitive and fastidious spirit; but the solemn tie which is to unite us must be cemented by implicit confidence; and under this conviction I pour out all the fulness of my heart.

" Perhaps, after the decided proof of attachment with which you have indulged me, it may seem ungrateful to acknowledge that I have a wish unsatisfied; and, indeed, the gentle kindness of your general manner is all I could wish: — but may I confess, without the fear of offending you, that there was a moment, — and that an interesting one, — in which you disappointed me. I am very far from concluding that manner is always the nicest and most correct interpreter of feeling, — I believe that it frequently does injustice to the warmest and purest that can animate a human bosom, and that the very intensity of our feelings may sometimes account for such an effect. This might have been the case when you communicated to me tidings that seemed to touch every spring of joy within my heart, and put them at once into motion. Perhaps, dearest Constance, they did awaken a kindred emotion in yours; — but I must be candid; — and forgive me if I say, that I missed the expression of such sympathy. Tell me that this was accidental, — tell me that I was mistaken: — one word from you will suffice to set my heart at ease.

"And now let me talk to you of Oakfield.—Nothing can be prettier than the village, with its scattered houses, cheerful green, and groups of fine tall trees. — Under the bright smile of spring it will be beautiful; for even the frown of winter does not make it cheerless. Every cottage and every cottage child were to me objects of interest. — I thought of the good that might be done, and of the account that would be required of me; — I thought of her with whom I should take sweet counsel, — of her who on some fair, future day would be my gentle, helpful companion, —

"'Of daily life the active kindly cheerer.'

My mind was busy with these anticipations, as I eagerly examined every nook and corner. — The house is commodious, and altogether rich in comfortable capabilities. — It is, indeed, just the spot where might be enjoyed, in all its fulness, —

"'Domestic bliss,
That can the world eluding be itself
A world enjoyed; that wants no witness
But its own sharers, and approving heaven,
That like a flower deep hid in rocky cleft,
Smiles though 'tis looking only at the sky.'

"Once more, — will such a lot satisfy my beloved Constance? — Tell me that it will, and what can add to the earthly happiness of

"Your faithful and affectionate

"GERARD MORTIMER?"

Constance read this letter with glowing cheeks and a beating heart, and escaped to her own room, there to hide the perturbation it excited. What could she do? — Confess the secret of her heart to Gerard; — wound him in the tenderest point; — tell him that his bright hopes were all a dream, — a delusive dream, — and at such a moment? — No; — it would be barbarous. He must never suspect the truth; — and yet how elude his penetration? how satisfy his wishes? how even reply to his letters? — The question probed her heart. — Could she then affect a tone of gaiety, — treat the subject with the light raillery of an unconscious and self-approving spirit? — Yet not to write would be to confirm his fears, — to insult his feelings. And was it indeed difficult to write to Gerard, — to him to whom she stood pledged in the closest and dearest bonds?

Many and bitter were the tears shed by Constance over this conviction, and hour after hour passed away without relieving her perplexity, or assisting her decision. At length a letter was sent, which spoke little of her own feelings, but much of Oakfield and of Gerard: — it spoke of the confidence inspired by his principles and qualities; but amidst the approving sentiments, the high esteem, and deference it breathed, a certain restraint was discoverable.

A day or two elapsed without tidings from Gerard; and in the next letter received by Constance no allusion was made to the subject in question. — It was dictated from his bed, and merely stated that, in one of his exploring rambles about Oakfield, he had been overtaken by a violent storm of rain; that the drenching he had experienced had brought on a severe cold, and that he was compelled to pay the penalty of close confinement till its effects were subdued; but that he should return to Elton the moment it could be done with safety.

CHAP. LV.

" The rose upon his cheek, she knew,
Bloom'd not with health's transparent hue,
And oft she mark'd within his eye
A wild unwonted brilliancy."

DALE.

A WEEK intervened before Gerard's arrival, and even then it was evident that he had travelled too soon: he was still suffering with cough and fever; and after a few days' vain struggle to conceal the extent of the malady, he consented to be treated as an invalid.

During these few days his whole manner had awakened a deep and painful interest in the mind of Constance. His tenderness was unabated, but it was tinged with a pensiveness amounting almost to melancholy. — Whether this was attributable to feelings of indisposition, or to concealed mental uneasiness, she could not determine; but it increased the disquietude of her own feelings. She sought to dissipate this melancholy by the tenderest sympathy, by

ceaseless endeavours to gratify his taste: — she read aloud his favourite authors, played his favourite airs, and tenderly prohibited exertion of every kind. Gerard appeared grateful for her kindness, and fully alive to the charm of her manner; and yet a cloud of sadness often gathered over his brow.

It was evident to Mrs. Grenville that his late indisposition had produced a return of the hectic symptoms which had formerly disquieted her; and at length he yielded to the urgent entreaties of those around him, and confined himself to the Rectory. — But day after day passed away without any mitigation of his disorder. — A harassing cough, nights of fever, and days of languor, combined to excite alarm; and at length an eminent physician was consulted.

Dr. Grey took a deep interest in the case: he was a man distinguished for skill and science, and still more distinguished for warm sympathies and kindly feelings. Gladly would he have met the anxious enquiries of Mr. Mortimer with cheerful predictions; — but he scarcely dared employ the language of hope. — The serious nature of a pulmonary complaint could not be disguised: — he feared it had taken but too

firm hold of the constitution; and though he did not speak with absolute despondency, yet he expressed himself very doubtfully as to the result. — A softer climate, when the spring came on, would, perhaps, do much; but, in the interim, any increase or aggravation of the symptoms must be fatal to their hopes; and the very greatest caution must be used. — Milk diet and an equal temperature were prescribed; and it was deemed essential that all agitation or excitement should be avoided.

Mr. Mortimer called at the Priory the following morning, to communicate Dr. Grey's opinion. — A grave and subdued expression mingled with the accustomed benignity of his countenance; and his manner to Constance was even more full of tenderness than usual. — She listened to him with tearful eyes.

" If Gerard could but be conveyed to a softer climate at this moment!" exclaimed she.

" I have often breathed that unavailing wish during the last fortnight," observed Mr. Mortimer; " but I must struggle to get my wishes and feelings into better order. — The arrangement is now impracticable; — and we have only

to watch and wait, — to exercise submission and self-control."

"Care and equability of temperature, even though artificial, may do a great deal," said Mrs. Grenville. "Gerard has hitherto been so prodigal of his health and strength, — so entirely careless, — that a different system may produce the best effects. We will all help to nurse," added she, trying to speak cheerfully; — "and let us hope, with the blessing of God, that constant care and watchfulness may arrest the progress of the disorder."

"I am quite willing to hope," replied Mr. Mortimer, "though I cannot shut my eyes to the insidious nature of his complaint; and Dr. Grey acknowledged enough to justify the fears of a father for his only son."

"Such a son, too," observed Mrs. Grenville, in a tone of gentle sympathy, "may excuse even excessive anxiety."

"No; — it accounts for, but does not excuse it," replied Mr. Mortimer. "The control and regulation of these fond feelings ought not to be impracticable to a Christian, for our help is from One that is mighty. — 'We have a Shepherd full of kindness, full of care, and full of

power,' and He will not fail us in these trials of the heart."

Constance wept abundantly. — The tenderness of Mr. Mortimer's manner conjured up a thousand accusing thoughts, and the danger of Gerard awakened all her sympathy. To allow his mind, at such a moment, to be harassed by suspicion, or wounded by unkindness, would be to destroy all hope of recovery, and, perhaps, to accelerate his fate; and to soothe and calm his spirits, to cheer the hours of pain and languor, by every demonstration of tender interest, appeared to her a sacred duty, which could not be too sedulously fulfilled.

"Gerard must submit to remain a close prisoner," said Mr. Mortimer; — "I hope, therefore, my dear Mrs. Grenville, that you and Constance will waive etiquette, and indulge us with as much of your time as can be spared: — your society will be sunshine to our dear invalid."

Mrs. Grenville and Constance did not hesitate a moment to promise that they would devote themselves to Gerard; and from that time they generally passed several hours of every day at the Rectory.

CHAP. LVI.

" O, woman ! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made;
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering Angel thou ! " MARMION.

ENDLESS were the fluctuations of Gerard's trying disorder: — sometimes hope lightened the hearts of his watchful and anxious friends, — then again these hopes were crushed by the recurrence of unfavourable symptoms; and after the lapse of some weeks, it became evident that his strength was gradually wasting, and that his days were too surely numbered.

The presence of Mrs. Grenville and her daughter appeared to have a soothing effect on his frame and feelings: — nothing could be more lovely than the whole manner of Constance: — she seemed instinctively to discover what would most soothe and gratify her patient, and hovered round him with the pure devoted-

ness of a ministering spirit. Never, in his best and brightest days, had Gerard's delightful qualities been so apparent; — not even the harassing nature of his disorder could fix his attention on himself: — his mind continued to retain all its vigour; indeed there appeared an increased quickness of perception, an increased intenseness of thought and feeling; — the spirit seemed to expand and brighten as the frame decayed; while his tenderness and kindly sympathies were in full exercise: — ardent love to God and to man beamed in every thought and word: — the brilliant morning of his life, and its premature evening, were alike dedicated to God.

Among those dear friends in whose society he took the deepest interest was Sir Henry Lennox. The friendship of these young men appeared to be no common link. While a hope existed that Gerard might be removed to a softer climate, Sir Henry proposed to accompany him; undertook to make all arrangements that could contribute to his comfort, and to devote himself wholly to the task of watching and nursing him during his absence from England. As that hope faded away, he seemed increasingly anxious to perform every kind office

that was yet in his power ; — every favourite pursuit and occupation were sacrificed to the dearer one of watching over his suffering friend.

From this circumstance Constance was unavoidably brought into frequent contact with Sir Henry; and when they met by the couch of the invalid, she was sometimes embarrassed by the fixed and silent gaze of Gerard ; — there beamed something in that penetrating eye which read the inmost secret of her soul,— something, she fancied, of reproachful, yet unspeakable tenderness, in the expression of his countenance. In vain she averted her eyes from Sir Henry, and appeared wholly occupied with the invalid, — that mournful and tender expression still remained ; — yet did Gerard appear anxious to retain them both near him ; — and Constance thought that he often devised expedients to keep her by his side when Sir Henry read to, or talked with, him. They were, indeed, hours of no common interest.

During the first month or two of Gerard's illness, subjects of taste and literature were often discussed with as much pleasure and animation as in his days of health ; but as he drew nearer to that bourne whence no traveller returns,

deeper thoughts occupied his mind, — holier sympathies exercised his heart: — he conversed on subjects of momentous import; — and it was with no common feelings that they listened to the outpourings of that rich and finished mind, and the breathings of that spirit which seemed already to have caught a beam of brightness and purity from the heaven towards which he was hastening.

There is something peculiarly impressive in the language of one — and that one a decided and faithful Christian — who stands on the confines of mortality, contemplating the world of time and the world of eternity in all their distinctness and reality; — the one with its fugitive joys and many sorrows, — its pride, and pomp, and pageantry, so soon to become like the baseless fabric of a vision; — the other with its ineffable hopes, or awful terrors, to endure for ever, — even for ages of eternal years. At such a moment the mind is completely disenchanted; — the charms, and spells, and cunning sorceries of earth, are utterly dissolved, and contrasted with the bright realities of heaven, appear worthless as the dim and fleeting shadows of a passing dream.

It was an object very near the heart of Gerard, to produce a change in some of Sir Henry's notions on the subject of religion. True, the fallacies of infidelity had no power over his clear understanding; — vicious and sensual indulgences were repugnant to his taste; — he was convinced of the truth, the excellence, and the importance of Christianity; — he respected piety as a principle, but he saw not the necessity, and he questioned the good taste, of making it sufficiently prominent to attract attention; — he dreaded being mixed up with the serious party in the classification of society; — he was by no means desirous of the reputation of piety; and, as far as profession went, was decidedly disposed to keep his religion in the background.

Gerard felt that there was self-delusion in all this; — that, amidst the entangling claims of society, it would probably lead to unwarrantable compromise; — that it was unfriendly to the interests of religion in the world, and unfriendly to the growth of it in the heart of his friend; — and he combated the impression with arguments drawn from the fountain of truth. He deemed it incumbent upon every individual, however

humble, to offer the tribute of his influence and example, even if they amounted but to a mite, on the altar of his God. — Surely the influence that would be largely diffused, — the example that would be widely felt, — must be of proportionable importance.

He considered simple, decided, earnest piety, blended with cultivated intellect and refined taste, to be the very salt of society, especially as it respected the higher ranks of polished life; — at once correcting its frivolity, and stemming its corruption; — and he was inexpressibly anxious to see Christian principle fearlessly avowed as the rule of Sir Henry's life, — as his first and paramount object.

Perhaps a dearer, softer interest blended with and quickened this anxiety; — for never was human heart more free from the alloy of selfishness than that of Gerard, and never was love more pure and beautifully disinterested than that which he cherished towards Constance.

CHAP. LVII.

" Alas! for those by drooping sickness worn,
Who now come forth to meet the gladsome ray,
And feel the fragrance of the tepid morn
Round their torn breast and throbbing temples play.

" Yet oft as sadly thronging dreams arise,
Awhile forgetful of their pain they gaze;
A transient lustre lights their faded eyes,
And o'er their cheek the tender hectic strays."

ELEGY.

SPRING returned in all its brightness and beauty: — the sun shone gaily in the heavens; — the earth teemed with fragrance; — the woods rung with melody: — but the beauty of this lovely season was scarcely heeded by the anxious friends of Gerard; — for hope had no sweet whisper, — no cheering smile to give; — indeed, there was something deeply affecting in the contrast presented by the bright cheerfulness of nature, —

" Redolent of youth and joy," —

and his drooping and wasted form; — he, too,

was in the morning of youth, — in the spring of life; — but a cloud had dimmed the brightness of that morning, — a blight had withered the beauty of that spring. Still the sweet influence and smiling aspect of the world around him in some degree revived his languid frame. — Hanging on the arm of his father, or Sir Henry, he might be seen slowly pacing along a raised walk in the garden of the Rectory, or reclining on a couch, breathing the balmy air, under the shelter of a rustic summer-house, which commanded a sweet quiet home view, made up of daisied meadows and beautiful glades: — there would he rest, while Constance sketched some spring flowers she had gathered by the way, or read to him from the book he best loved.

As they were one morning thus engaged, they saw Sir Henry hastening to join them, by a path leading immediately from a private gate of the Park to that part of the little shrubbery which wound round to the summer-house.

"How rich am I in friends!" exclaimed Gerard, pressing the hand of Constance, as he watched the quick step of Sir Henry. "What

sunshine can they throw even over the darkest hour ! "

They sat in silence a few minutes watching his approach : — he was scarcely twenty paces from the gate, when they heard shouts at a distance, and instantly a large dog rushed through an opening in the hedge, and made towards him. The creature was covered with foam, and evidently in a rabid state. — Constance looked for a moment, — then uttered a piercing skriek, — and flew towards the spot where Sir Henry stood ; and Gerard, forgetting all his weakness, under the energy of excitement, hastened to follow ; — he was, however, quickly obliged to stop, and to throw himself on the turf in the helplessness of exhaustion, while Constance pursued her rapid course.

In vain Sir Henry, when he caught a glimpse of her form, by vehement gestures and exclamations, implored her to keep back : — she stopped for a moment, only to pick up a large stone, which she hurled with all her strength at the enraged animal.

Diverted from his attack by this new assailant, the dog turned upon Constance. — Sir Henry was at her side in a moment, and fold-

ing one arm round her, endeavoured to defend her with the other; but vain would have been his efforts, had not some countrymen, who were in close pursuit, come up with the animal, and in a moment laid him dead at their feet.

The whole incident occupied but two or three minutes; — but it was long ere the feelings of either party subsided into tranquillity. — Constance, in an agony of terror, exclaimed, "Are you safe? — Are you unhurt?" — And then, overpowered with emotion, leaned against a tree for support, and burst into tears. — Sir Henry threw his arm round her, and looking at her with unutterable tenderness, and murmuring the fondest thanks and blessings, sought to soothe and compose her spirits.

A few minutes had thus passed, when Gerard, with a feeble, tottering step advanced towards them: — his presence recalled the scattered thoughts and bewildered senses of Constance: — she withdrew herself from the encircling arm of Sir Henry, and extending her hand to Gerard, exclaimed, —

"The danger is past: — he is quite safe; — but, oh, what a fearful moment!"

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable mercies," returned Gerard, in a tone of fervent piety: — "but are you quite sure that you have sustained no harm?"

The coat of Sir Henry bore testimony to the fierce attack of the animal, and the white dress of Constance was torn and soiled; but they themselves had escaped without injury.

"You, I fear, will be the chief sufferer," said Sir Henry, looking with alarm at the hectic cheek of Gerard, and his bright glistening eye: — "lean on me, and let us get into the house as soon as possible."

Constance stole to the side of Gerard, and looking timidly in his face, caught again that fond and mournful expression which she had before observed. He was conducted to his chamber; and the effects of the strong excitement of the morning were soon visible. For three days he continued so ill, that no person but Mr. Mortimer and Sir Henry were permitted to see him. On the fourth, he left his chamber for a sofa in the adjoining room, and requested to see Constance alone.

CHAP. LVIII.

" Have I not loved, and striven, and fail'd to bind
Thy true heart unto me, whereon my own
Might find a resting place, a home for all
Its burden of affections?"

RECORDS OF WOMAN.

CONSTANCE was shocked at the alteration which three days' suffering had produced in Gerard's appearance; and seated herself in silent sorrow by his side.

" Come still nearer to me, dearest," said he: — " I have much to say, and must husband my strength."

He pressed her hand fervently to his lips, then took it between both his, and continued a few minutes without speaking; — at length fixing his eyes fondly on her face, — " My beloved Constance," said he, " how much have I to thank you for! — with what gentle, patient kindness — with what sweet tenderness — have you watched over me! — your task, dear one, draws to a close; for I feel that I am wearing

away — fast wearing away — to 'the land of the leal.'"

Constance could only weep: — the expression of hope would have been but idle mockery.

"I will not bid you dry your tears; for they are precious to me, — very precious: — who would not value such sweet sympathy! — and yet I know," here Gerard paused for a moment, — "I know full well, my Constance, that the first place in your heart is not mine."

The cheeks of Constance flushed to crimson in a moment: — her lip quivered, her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she could only listen with a throbbing heart: Gerard again pressed her hand to his lips.

"Be not thus agitated, dearest," said he. "With whom can your secret be so safe as with him, whose love for you no circumstances can change, no coldness can chill? Till my heart ceases to beat, you will be cherished there as its dearest earthly treasure."

"Oh, stop Gerard! — do not kill me by such tenderness! — rather hate, despise me!" exclaimed Constance, kneeling in an agony of distress by his side, and hiding her face.

"You have been to blame, my beloved one: — I should ill deserve the name of friend, if I could confound, for your sake, the eternal distinctions of right and wrong: — but you were misled by the generous kindness of your nature; — you would not crush the hope you had unconsciously fostered, — you were willing to sacrifice yourself for my sake."

"Generous, kind, dear Gerard!" exclaimed Constance, overwhelmed with a sense of his forbearance and generosity: — "never, never can you reconcile me to myself, — my self-respect is for ever gone; — but, oh, if at this moment the boon of health were vouchsafed to you, — if you could be spared to our prayers, — if it were possible to fulfil our engagement, — you would find me faithful — devoted." —

"Hush, dearest Constance," said Gerard, in great emotion: — "I must not listen: — that dream — that dream of rapture — is over:" — he passed his hand quickly over his eyes, to brush away a tear that trembled there: — "that dream! it is gone," continued he; — "and the sad moment of awakening from it has also passed: — recall them not, my sweet friend, — in pity, — in mercy, — recall them not."

He paused, and the sobs of Constance alone disturbed the silence of the apartment. — After a struggle for self-possession, Gerard resumed the subject.

"The letter you addressed to me at Oakfield was decisive," said he: — "the die was then cast: — I knew how eagerly the heart that really loved, would have disclaimed the coldness by which mine had been wounded, — how eagerly it would have dispelled the doubt by which mine was at that moment harassed. — You had been misled by false reasoning, but you retained the ingenuousness of your nature, and it betrayed the secret. Dearest, had you consulted your conscience rather than your feelings, had you prayed earnestly for direction to Him who can alone give a right judgment in all things, when you rashly accepted my presumptuous proposals, you would not have made so fatal an error: — the Spirit of God would have enlightened your conscience, — He would have rectified your judgment: — we are safe only under His guidance, my precious friend; — but you, — you will seek that guidance earnestly."

Gerard again pressed the hand of Constance between both his, and breathed for her the most fervent prayers. — " It is by completely resigning our will to His, that we can alone attain that ' peace which passeth all understanding.' He, whose mighty voice could still the beating and dashing wave, can whisper to the stormy passions of man's heart, — ' Peace, be still,' — and then there will be a ' great calm.' I can now bless that gracious power, which, by a wise and beautiful arrangement, deduces good from evil. I am spared the anguish of leaving you with a heart reft and desolate, as yours must have been, had you loved me as I once fondly dreamed. My heart, indeed, was deeply wounded; but in tenderness did my heavenly Father smite, — in mercy has he healed. I am now thankful, — grateful, — that to me you are only the kindest of friends. I can see that dear heart (it is a sweet and precious gift, my Constance,) bestowed upon another without a jealous pang, — and he deserves the gift. — Do not hide your face, dear Constance; — listen when I tell you, that he is not insensible of its value, — long has he loved you, — long has your image been blended with his dearest hopes; — long has it mingled in his

fondest dreams: — may those dear hopes be all fulfilled!"

Constance could not raise her eyes, but the beating of her heart was almost audible.

"What misery am I spared, — what mischief might I have unconsciously wrought!" exclaimed Gerard, after a pause, — "to have divided two hearts thus fondly attached. — Thank God the sacrifice was not completed."

"Gerard," said Constance, raising her tearful eyes timidly to his face, "do not use that word: — wayward as the heart is, and unable to control its first fond feelings, yet to have been the chosen of your heart ——"

"No, no, my sweet Constance, I will not recall the word; — to me, also, our union, — that desired union, — would have been a sacrifice. — Think you that I could have been content to forego those deep fond feelings of which you speak: — would the meed of esteem, would the sentiment of approbation, have supplied their place? — these can be won from the world; from strangers; — but that dearer, softer, fonder feeling! how could I have borne to miss it in the wife of my bosom? — where would have been the boundless confidence, that

gives to home its nameless, its sacred charm? — where the sweet trust, the free fond glance of perfect sympathy? — No, — if at this instant health and vigour were restored to me my decision would be the same. I should resign you to him who has won your heart; — may he cherish it as fondly, as faithfully!" — Here Gerard paused; — "but he will, — he will!" exclaimed he, recovering himself: — with what noble disinterestedness has he acted! — with what admirable self-command! — and with feelings so tender, so devoted. — Yes, — a sweet reward awaits him: — but I will talk no more at present, Constance: — my heart is relieved, but my strength fails. — My silent prayers will rise up for you both at the throne of grace. — Do me the favour to ring the bell: — I must borrow a more stalwart arm than yours, by way of staff," said he with a faint smile: — "and you need repose," added he, looking fondly at her, "almost as much as myself: — to-morrow, perhaps, you will indulge me again with a visit."

CHAP. LIX.

" Alas! we think it sad
To part with life when all the earth looks glad
In her young lovely things; when voices break
Into sweet sounds, and leaves and blossoms wake:
Is it not brighter, then, in that far clime
Where graves are not, nor blights of changeful time, —
If *here* such glory dwell with passing blooms,
Such golden sunshine rest around the tombs?
So thought the dying one." MRS. HEMANS.

FOR some days after this interview, Gerard appeared to revive: — a sweet and holy calm sat on his brow, and a spirit of love and peace breathed in every word that escaped him: — never had he seemed more alive to the charms of nature, — more grateful for the sweet sympathies of friendship and kindred. — The weather was unusually bright and fine, and the garden, orchard, and shrubbery, wore each its loveliest dress: — every bough was thickly studded with blossoms; — every shrub was rich in flowers; — and the soft air creeping over them stole their sweetest odours.

Gerard, leaning on a couch in the summer-house, for some time silently enjoyed the scene: — Mr. Mortimer, Sir Henry, and Constance were near him: — a certain consciousness might, perhaps, have been detected, when the eyes of Constance and Sir Henry met, but no change of manner was discoverable: they were wholly occupied with administering to the ease and comfort of their beloved invalid.

"What a rich chorus!" exclaimed Gerard, who had been listening to the delicious warblings poured forth from an adjoining thicket. "What a regale is here provided both for the eye and the ear!" — He looked for some moments on the scene around him, and his eye beamed with grateful pleasure. — "How the heart thrills with a sense of the goodness of God, as we contemplate the lovely landscape," said he.

> "'Flowers in the valley, splendour in the beam,
> Health on the gale, and freshness in the stream.'"

Mr. Mortimer shook his head mournfully as Gerard pronounced the words health on the gale.

"Health, indeed," continued Gerard, looking at his father with tender sympathy, "comes

not to all; — but then better blessings are vouchsafed, — the hope of brighter skies, and softer gales, and flowers of richer fragrance than earth can give, bright and beautiful as they are: — oh, with what deep and fond melancholy should I gaze on the beauty of nature without this precious hope: — the hum of the insect as it floats on the idle air, — the sweet lay of love poured from those little throats, — would sound like a requiem to my ear; — those glowing blossoms would tell only of beauty and pleasure that must wither and die." — Gerard paused for a few moments, and appeared absorbed in meditation. — "Yes," resumed he, — "summer will wreathe her rich roses, — the song of the reaper will echo through these vallies — they will stand thick with corn, — the boughs will glow again with ruddy fruit, — but not for me: — ere that time my voice will be mute, — my eyes will be closed. — I shall hear no more that which is dearer to me than any earthly music, — the sweet breathings of tenderness. — I shall see no more the melting glance of fond affection: — soon must such sweet ties be dissolved, — soon must the dust return to its kindred dust, and the spirit to

Him who gave it." — Gerard again paused: — tears were fast flowing down the cheeks of Constance; — and Mr. Mortimer and Sir Henry felt too much emotion to speak.

"Oh, if this world were all!" continued Gerard: — "but no, a deeper, dearer, holier tie will still exist between us: — as the redeemed children of God, — as heirs of immortality, — we shall meet to part no more. — No longer, indeed, shall we take sweet counsel together on earth; — no longer shall we behold together the beauty and glory of this world; — but we shall together tread the courts of heaven, — we shall dwell together by the tree of life — in the paradise of God. — My dearest father, — I owe you ten thousand, thousand thanks for all the sacrifices you have made for me, — for your unwearied tenderness, — which knew no pause, — no ebb, — no bound. Your countless acts of love are registered in my heart; — but for the principles you instilled, — the Christian instruction you bestowed, — the Christian hopes you fostered, — the Christian example you set before me; — for all this, what language can express my deep and fervent gratitude? — And will not this *sentiment* glow even

more intensely in heaven? — Can it die with the perishing clay?"

Gerard was silent for a few minutes, apparently enjoying the full consolation of the hope he had expressed. — "Surely," said he, resuming the conversation, "those who doubt that such recognition will take place, lose a sweet source of comfort and joy."

"The presumption of reason is at least in its favour," observed Sir Henry: "for it is a hope that has blended with the belief of a future state among all nations and people where that belief has obtained: — not only do they expect to recognise those they have loved on earth, but to meet the good and great of former ages. Socrates anticipated with delight a meeting with Homer, Hesiod, and Orpheus. Cicero rejoiced in the hope of being re-united with Cato. — The worshipper of Valhalla believes that he shall feast in the palace of Odin with the heroes and warriors with whom he raised the shout of battle. — The Indian expects to renew the joys of the chase associated with kindred chiefs, and surrounded by the spirits of his fathers. It is a hope to which the heart seems naturally and fondly to cling."

"And why should not a Christian indulge it?" said Gerard: — "if not expressly taught, is it not implied in the New Testament? — and how sweetly consoling is the thought that though death interrupts it cannot destroy the delightful association of kindred minds! — Why should not the disembodied spirit retain the knowledge, the impressions, and attachments of this mortal state? — We have no reason to believe that memory or consciousness will be lost; on the contrary, in those passages of Scripture which refer to a future state the memory is described as vivid and active. — Will the pastor and the flock he has carefully guided through the wilderness, meet as strangers in the heavenly Canaan? — Will they not be his glory and his joy? — Will not the parent recognise the child for whose eternal welfare he has toiled, and prayed, and wept? — Will he have led him through the narrow way to the gate of heaven, there to be estranged from him for ever? — Surely it cannot be! — My dearest father, does not the heart revolt from the strange doctrine?"

"Mine disavows it," replied Mr. Mortimer. — "The staff of my age is, indeed, about to be withdrawn," continued he, in a faltering

voice, — "the light of my eyes to be hidden; — but a few short years — perhaps only a few short months — will pass away, and then I shall go to you, — though you will no more return to me: — our bodies will be gathered to one grave, and our spirits rejoice in holy and blissful reunion in the kingdom of our Father."

There was a pause of some minutes: — at length Mr. Mortimer, struggling with his own emotions, observed that Gerard looked fatigued, and proposed returning to the house.

CHAP. LX.

" Speak, oh, speak !
And take me from the rack.
Heav'n grant my senses fail me !
I rather would lose them than have this real."

YOUNG.

In the evening of that day, as Constance sat in her dressing-room wrapt in melancholy musing, the door suddenly opened, and a person, closely muffled, entered the room. It was twilight, and by the glimmering of the fire she could only discern the tall figure of a man advancing cautiously towards her. — Startled and terrified, her first impulse was to reach the bell, and procure assistance; but as she rose for that purpose, she felt her arm seized, and heard the voice of Edward exclaiming, " Make no disturbance, child: — I want to have some private talk with you."

" How dreadfully you have frightened me !" said Constance, resuming her seat, for she

was scarcely able to stand; — "such tricks are really cruel."

"Tricks! my dear," returned he; "there you are quite mistaken. I am here *incog.* for very excellent reasons: — not a creature knows of my arrival: I discharged my chaise at the end of the lane, walked in at the back gate, and took my chance of finding you in your own room."

"And why this mystery? what can it all mean?" enquired Constance.

"Aye, there is the rub, my dear; but are we quite safe here? Will no officious abigail disturb us?" said Edward advancing to the door and locking it.

"Edward," said Constance, more and more perplexed, "do tell me in a moment what has happened."

"In a moment!" echoed he: "no, no, I cannot promise that, my dear, because the story is rather a long one; — to say the truth, I have got into a monstrous dilemma, and I want your sage counsel to help me out of it."

"Had you not better at once consult my mother?" said Constance.

"Why all in good time, — it must come to that, I suppose; — but as it is a deuced ugly business, I thought it best to break the ice with you."

Constance entreated him to explain.

"Well, first, then, I must beg to premise that I am not at all to blame in the affair. — It was a mere frolic, entered into in the very exuberance of fun. — We sons of mirth, my dear, are not to be judged of by common rules."

"What can you have done?" enquired Constance, who felt more and more alarmed.

"Well, to come to the point," continued Edward, — "did you ever hear me speak of Frank Cumberland, — a super-excellent friend of mine?"

"No; I never heard of him: — I know nothing about him," answered Constance, in a desponding tone.

"Then you have never heard of the prince of good fellows. — Many a glorious evening we have had together, amidst bright eyes and laughing voices; — many a frolic have we to register in the history of our nocturnal rambles: — now do not imagine by that description that he is merely a gay rattle. — I assure you he is a

first-rate person as to mind, and genius, and all that sort of thing: — he can be quite sublime and sentimental at times, and talk by the hour of Byron, and Wordsworth, and Scott, and those worthies: — only nobody enjoys a thorough mad frolic more than he does."

"Charming exploits, indeed, to boast of," exclaimed Constance: — "I am sure they are very disgraceful to you."

"Disgraceful! — oh, not at all, my dear: — these nightly rambles have been the fashion ever since the days of Haroun Alraschid; and many a prince, I assure you, besides Prince Hal has practised such things; — so there is no disgrace in the matter."

"If it is any adventure of this kind that you have to relate," said Constance, coldly, "I think I am not exactly the person to whom it ought to be confided."

"Pshaw! my dear; — now do you think it likely that I should take a post-chaise and four just to tell you that I had broken one or more pretty girls' hearts, — or one or more watchmen's heads: — no, no, would to heaven it were nothing else!" added he gravely.

"Tell me at once what it is," said Constance.

" Well, come, I will give it you chapter and verse, if you will listen patiently. — As I before hinted, Frank Cumberland and I are kindred souls: — there is a surprising harmony in our tastes and feelings in many points, and there is one upon which we perfectly agree, that an empty purse is the very climax of evils! — Now he happens to have an uncle as rich as Crœsus, and as miserly as Elwes. — The wretch does nothing else but heap ingot upon ingot, and add field to field. — I really believe the old rascal is worth a million; and not one farthing will he make over to Frank, because he knows him to be a fine, liberal-spirited fellow. — One evening as Frank and I were lamenting the unequal distribution of the good things of this life, after abusing his uncle heartily, as was very natural, he said, — 'Do you know the old fox has contrived to get that land he wanted close to his estate, — and for half price too, — of a poor varlet, like myself, who was obliged to sell. — He is to pay five thousand for it, — and it is at least worth ten.'

" 'Oh, he must have given more for it,' said I.

" 'No; — I know he placed five thousand pounds in his banker's hands, to be ready for

the purchase, for I happened to be with him at the time,' said Frank. — 'It would be capital fun,' added he, after a pause, 'to give him a fright about it, if one could but imitate his vile pot-hooks.'

"Frank took from his pocket a letter of the old hunks.

"'That would be easy enough,' said I, glancing at the cramped hand; 'and it really would be capital fun. — I would give any thing to see his face, when he found the money gone: — he would fancy his right trusty and well-beloved cousin, the devil, had been before hand with him.'

"Well, we were so delighted with the notion, that I executed a capital fac-simile of the miserable creature's signature; and as it happens that I keep cash at the same banker's, it was the easiest thing in the world to fill up a check; — and, sure enough, it was paid. — Frank received it himself: they never made a demur, concluding that he was acting for his uncle."

Constance listened in mute horror. — A confused, but dreadful idea of the peril to which her brother had exposed himself, glanced across

her mind, and the ghastly paleness of her countenance alarmed Edward.

" Do not faint," said he, " my dear child, if you can help it. — What will become of me if you faint? — This is not a tale to tell abruptly to my mother."

He bathed her hands and face with water, and at length a flood of tears relieved her. — " How dreadful!" exclaimed she, when the power of speech was restored to her; — " how very dreadful!"

" Come, do not frighten yourself to death, my love," resumed Edward: " I am heartily sorry that the joke was carried so far: — we were both egregious fools, but we shall manage the matter somehow or other. — The worst of it is, Frank Cumberland has taken himself out of the way; — he and the five thousand pounds have vanished together. — I know it is only to keep up the joke, but it puts me in an awkward predicament enough. — By this time the transaction is buzzed half round the town. — Old Morton is in such a rage, that he has actually offered a reward for Frank's apprehension, — the apprehension of his own nephew! — Can you conceive any thing so diabolical? — Of

course, when this came to my knowledge, I went immediately to the banker, to explain the whole transaction. — I shall always like old M'Intosh: — upon my word, I thought he would have gone off in a fit, he was so agitated. — He was, you know, acquainted with my father, and really the man's feelings went to my heart. — It was not till I saw his horror-struck face, that the possibilities of the case occurred to me. — 'It is nothing in the world but a frolic, my dear sir,' said I.

"'I believe it, Captain Grenville,' replied he: — 'I believe you to be capable of any folly to any extent,' (very complimentary, by the by,) 'and I acquit you of all but the maddest imprudence: — but the public, however, may form a different opinion;' and then he went on to dilate upon the jeopardy in which I had placed myself, and a hundred horrid things."

"My poor mother!" exclaimed Constance, shuddering; — "my poor mother!"

"Do not look so woe-begone, my dear; for I promise you, I will send a bullet through the head of any man who dares for a moment question my honour."

There was a pause, and Edward strode hastily up and down the room.

" Well, — then came the cruel questions," resumed he, " ' And pray what has become of Mr. Cumberland? — and why does he not come forward, as you have done? — why does not he replace the money?' — I was obliged to confess that I knew not where to find him."

" ' You had better get away, sir,' said Mr. M'Intosh, in a perturbation which was very infectious; — ' you had better get away; — you are not safe here a moment. — I am really afraid your friend is good for nothing. — And how is the money to be replaced?'

" ' That must be my affair,' replied I. — ' If Frank does not appear in twenty-four hours, I pledge myself to replace it. — I suppose old Morton will be satisfied with that?'

" ' I wish I was sure of it, sir,' ejaculated Mr. M'Intosh vehemently: — ' he is furious, and threatens the utmost vengeance. — I know Mr. Morton better than you do, — and he has the means in his power: — the forged check is in his hands at this moment,' added he, in great agitation. — ' But get out of town, —

arrange the matter with your friends, — and I will do all I can for you.'

" So here I am; — and now you know the whole of this vile affair."

" What is to be done? — how are we to break it to my mother, — my dear, dear mother?" exclaimed Constance, covering her face with her hands, and sobbing hysterically.

" There is no time to be lost, however," said Edward. — " Throw myself upon her mercy I must; for, as to five thousand pounds, I have not five thousand pence in the world. — I shall be eternally disgraced if the money is not forthcoming directly. — You know it will be but for a few days, for Frank will be sure to return it: — I would stake my life upon his honour."

" Yes, she must know it," said Constance, rising in desperation; — " this dreadful tale must be unfolded to her. — Stay where you are, Edward; — I will find her myself."

CHAP. LXI.

—— "All other passions change
With changing circumstances, rise or fall,
Dependent on their object; claim returns;
Live on reciprocation, and expire
Unfed by hope. A mother's fondness reigns
Without a rival, and without an end."

MRS. MORE.

MRS. GRENVILLE listened to the detail which Constance communicated with intense anguish. — For some minutes she sat mute and motionless, overwhelmed by the conflicting feelings which wrung her heart: — at length a silent tear stole down her cheek, and in a voice half choked with agitation, she exclaimed, "Thank God, my beloved husband did not live to see this day! — thank God, he is spared the agony of this moment!"

Again she was silent for a few minutes, which were passed in mental prayer for support and direction; — then, making a strong effort to control her emotion, she endeavoured, with her usual promptness and energy, to determine the

wisest course to be pursued; but every look and gesture betrayed the deepest suffering. — Reflection, indeed, seemed but to increase her perplexity. — Thankfully would she have advanced the required sum, even at the expense of any personal comfort; but Mr. Herbert's name was united with her own as trustee for Colonel Grenville's funded property, no part of which could she touch without his concurrence. — Even could that be gained, she knew not at the present moment where to find him, as he was visiting in a distant county: — in miserable and almost hopeless perplexity, therefore, she summoned her son to the conference.

"I spare you all reproaches, Edward," said she, in broken accents; — "at this moment they would be useless and cruel. — Gladly would I make any sacrifice to shield you from the shame and misery which I fear this rash act must entail, — but I cannot act independently. — Is there any plan that you can suggest? — what can be done?"

"I know nothing," said Edward in a fierce and hurried tone, "but that I am ruined, if the money cannot be raised. — However," continued he with increased vehemence, "I have a remedy

in my hands. — Not for a single day will I bear to be the object of suspicion, — of disgrace, — to have my name blasted, — held up to contempt and obloquy. — No, — no; — I have a little friend here," continued he, taking one of his travelling pistols from his pocket, "that will at any rate deliver me from such a fate."

"Edward!" exclaimed Mrs. Grenville, shuddering, "have mercy upon yourself, if you have none upon me, — and presume not to use this wicked, — this unmanly language: — if you have no touch of pity for us, dread the eternal vengeance that may be hurled on your wretched head!"

A reckless smile, mingled with something like a sneer, passed over the features of Edward.

"Well, well," said he, "I am not at all weary of this world yet; — it has been a merry one enough to me: — so let us devise some expedient, — some plan of proceeding, if possible."

Constance suggested that it was not entirely impossible that Mr. Herbert might have arrived unexpectedly at the Manor House; — and, accordingly, a note was despatched to Lady

Lennox to make the enquiry, adding, that her mother wished to see him on urgent business.

The interval that elapsed during the absence of the messenger, appeared interminable to Edward, who passed it in striding up and down the room, uttering imprecations on his own folly. Mrs. Grenville and Constance remained silent, except when they occasionally tried to suggest to each other a hope or a consolation which neither of them felt.

At length the servant returned with a note from Lady Lennox, lamenting the absence of Mr. Herbert, but mentioning that Sir Henry would be at the Priory immediately.

Edward almost shouted with joy at this intelligence. — "It will be done! — it will be done!" exclaimed he: — "Sir Henry is an admirable fellow! — as generous as the day: — he will lend us the money in a trice. — Ah, my dear," continued he, passing suddenly from extreme despondency to his usual rattling style, "you used me abominably in not being Lady Lennox."

The cheeks of Constance flushed to crimson in a moment. — Recent circumstances recurred

but too forcibly with the mention of Sir Henry's name: — she started up in extreme agitation, — and exclaiming, " Let me go, — only let me escape," — hurried out of the room.

In crossing the hall, however, she suddenly encountered Sir Henry: — he had followed the servant with so much speed, that they had arrived nearly at the same moment.

" Constance," said he, as the lamp in the hall threw its light on her pale and agitated face, — " dear, dear Constance, — you are in some affliction: — nay, do not deny me the privilege of soothing it," continued he, pressing gently the hand he had taken, and which she, overwhelmed with confusion, was endeavouring to withdraw: — " may I not claim such a privilege?" continued he, drawing her towards him.

The peculiar tenderness of his tone and manner, while it touched the heart of Constance, convinced her that all disguise with respect to her own feelings, must now be useless. — Sir Henry knew the secret of her heart. — Without raising her eyes, therefore, but in a gentle and tremulous voice, " Do not think me insensible to your kindness," said she, — " do not think me ungrateful, — if I run away from you at this

moment: — but my feelings have been so harassed, — my heart is so full," — she paused, and looked up at him for an instant, — then again averted her eyes. — He drew her towards him with a look of protecting fondness, which could soothe even at that moment.

" I cannot explain," continued she, gently disengaging herself; — " but we have received such a shock: — you will hear all in a few minutes; — and now will you permit me to go?"

Sir Henry released her hand reluctantly, and she ran to her own room, while he made his way to that where Mrs. Grenville and Edward were awaiting his arrival.

Upon being made acquainted with the circumstances, he instantly endeavoured to quiet the alarm and soothe the feelings of Mrs. Grenville, — insisted upon making immediate arrangements for advancing the required sum, — and proposed setting off for London early on the following morning. Towards Edward, indeed, his manner was somewhat cold and stern. — Sir Henry's lofty mind revolted from the selfish and heartless levity of such a character; and nothing but the consciousness that he was conferring an obligation restrained him from expressing the

disgust and contempt which such conduct excited. — Of this obligation, however, he made light, affecting full confidence in Edward's opinion of Frank Cumberland. Mrs. Grenville decided upon accompanying them to town, that she might not lose a moment in ascertaining the result of the negotiation with Mr. Morton. They were to set off at five o'clock; — and Sir Henry took his leave, conjuring her to cherish the hope that all would be satisfactorily arranged, and urging her to endeavour, in the interim, to get a few hours' sleep.

Many and bitter were the tears she shed in the solitude of her own apartment. — The peril and disgrace that seemed to hover round her thoughtless son were, indeed, sufficient to alarm and distress her; — but a deeper and darker fear mingled with these feelings: — she thought of this her only son as an alien from God, — an outcast from heaven. — Who but those who have mourned, and prayed, and wept over one thus erring, yet dearer than life to their affections, can tell the unutterable agony of such a fear? — yet amidst this deep woe the weeping mother had one sure refuge, — the throne of grace, — the bosom of her Father and

her God: — there she could pour forth the plaints never breathed to mortal ear: — there she could plead with the blessed certainty, that every tear was remembered, — every meek petition registered: — there she sought and found comfort: — she remembered the rich compassion which welcomed the prodigal, while yet a great way off: — she listened to the whispers of faith and hope, and rose from her knees with tearful eyes, but with calmer and more hopeful feelings.

CHAP. LXII.

" Shall Hope, the faithful cherub, hear thy call,
She, who like heaven's own sunbeam smiles for all?
Will she speak comfort? — Thou hast shorn her plume,
That might have raised thee far above the tomb,
And hush'd the only voice whose angel-tone
Soothes when all melodies of joy are flown."

MRS. HEMANS.

THREE long days elapsed before Constance received a letter from Mrs. Grenville. — With an eager and trembling hand she broke the seal, and read as follows : —

" *To Miss Grenville.*

" My dearest Constance,

" I know how severely you must have been suffering from the suspense which I have hitherto vainly wished to relieve, and I will no longer delay writing, though even now I have little to communicate but harassing doubts and fears. — As early as possible, after our arrival in town, the money was replaced in the banker's

hands, and Sir Henry and Mr. M'Intosh proceeded to Mr. Morton's; but their first interview was most dispiriting: — his vindictive spirit appeared unconquerable: — he breathed vengeance against his nephew and Edward; — declined all compromise or conciliation, and obstinately refused to give up the fatal check. — Oh, what an evening did we pass! — Never shall I forget the anguish — the agony of that moment! — nor shall I ever cease gratefully to remember the tender, soothing kindness of Sir Henry, — his patience towards our unhappy Edward, who, alternately infuriated and desponding, was almost unmanageable. Every hope that ingenuity could suggest, — every consolation that sympathy could supply, — did he offer, with a delicacy and tenderness which have endeared him to me for ever. Then his unwearied, indefatigable exertions! — again and again has he waited upon Mr. Morton, and reasoned and pleaded, though, alas! hitherto in vain. The disappearance of his nephew has exasperated him to fury: — he believes it possible that Edward may have acted only like a madman and a fool; but Frank Cumberland he pronounces to be a villain, and threatens

vengeance even if both are implicated in its effects. Sir Henry, however, is not hopeless: — he thinks there was something more like relenting in his manner this morning, though no promise of forbearance could be obtained. — But, even should this hope be realized, Edward will, doubtless, have to drink deeply of the bitter cup of mortification. — Rumour, with her hundred tongues, has been already but too busy; and it is an affair so open to misrepresentation, — so inviting misconstruction, — that he must suffer from their effects; and his fiery spirit will indignantly resent the slander which he himself has provoked. — Sir Henry is quite alive to this danger, and anxiously devises plans by which it may be averted.

"You shall hear from me again to-morrow, dearest Constance, — and may I have cheering tidings to send!

"Ever your affectionate mother,

"H. Grenville."

On the evening of the same day, as Constance was meditating with mournful interest upon the events of the last week, the following

letter arrived from Mrs. Grenville, by a special messenger: —

"Dearest Constance,

"I write to you in the utmost agitation. — Our negotiations, with Mr. Morton, are at an end: — they have been terminated by a most melancholy and frightful catastrophe, and he is now suffering all that can be inflicted by unavailing yet deep remorse. — His unhappy nephew was discovered this morning in a dying state, at an obscure lodging in the neighbourhood of London: — he had just sufficient strength and consciousness left to request that his uncle and Edward might be sent for; but, before they reached the spot, he had breathed his last. — What an overwhelming, dreadful moment for them both! — The last time they beheld him he was in the full flush of youth and health: — his laughing eye bright with glee: — his joyous tones seemed still to ring on the ear. The contrast was fearful. When they entered the room, a ghastly spectacle presented itself: — his features exhibited all the convulsive distortion of a violent death. The fatal instrument of self-murder lay near him. One hurried glance

alone did they give, — then, overwhelmed with horror, hastened away, haunted by the dreadful image.

"Self-reproach was busy with each of them: — the mad folly of the one, and the bitter implacability of the other, have been the immediate causes of this deplorable event. A letter was found on the table addressed to Edward, of which I enclose a copy:

"Alas! who can dwell, without shuddering, on the untimely fate of this wretched young man, who has closed a life of careless profligacy by rushing unbidden, — uncalled, — into the presence of his Almighty Judge? — He, who shrunk with such proud sensitiveness from the reproaches and condemnation of mortals, frail and feeble like himself, braves the vengeance of Omnipotence! — Strange infatuation! — Alas, alas! — well may we tremble for those who are living without God in the world, when such are its fatal results. I cannot describe the mingled emotions with which I think of my unhappy Edward, — the intense anxiety excited by his present state of mind. He is deeply shocked by this event, — but neither repentant nor humiliated; — speaking of the rash and daring act as the heroic deed of an heroic mind, and proving

by every word that escapes him such an entire dereliction of principle, that I cannot listen without shuddering; — and yet I am grateful that he is not, like his unfortunate friend, beyond the reach of hope or pardon; — that he may still listen to the voice of God, — to the warnings of conscience which are addressing him so forcibly at this very moment: — unite your prayers with mine, dear Constance, that the awful and striking lesson may come home with resistless power to his heart, — that we may have the unspeakable comfort of seeing him live henceforth not to himself, but to his duty and to his God. That both my beloved children may be presented faultless before the eternal throne in that awful day which is rapidly approaching, is the fervent prayer of their

" Most affectionate mother,

" H. GRENVILLE."

The letter of Frank Cumberland was as follows: —

" *To Captain Grenville.*

" I must write to you, Edward, though my head is in so confused a state that I am afraid I shall be incoherent; but difficult as it is, I will

try to collect my scattered thoughts, — I will be intelligible, if possible. Perhaps by this time you, in common with the rest of the world, have come to the charitable conclusion that I am a scoundrel and a cheat; — if so, both you and the world are mistaken, — I am neither the one nor the other, — I am only the most unfortunate wretch breathing. Hear my tale, and judge for yourself. When first I obtained possession of my uncle's five thousand pounds, my sole intention was to give the old miser a panic: — I swear this upon the honour of a soldier and a gentleman; — indeed you well know that I fully intended to replace the money when the ague-fit had been severe enough. The possession of this tempting sum, however, conjured up a new train of thought and feeling; and my evil genius, I suppose, was at work: — visions of independence, of affluence, of splendour, flitted before me: — in one lucky half-hour I might be rich for life: — debts, — duns, — difficulties, — all would vanish for ever. Hitherto the gaming-table had possessed few attractions for me, — now it presented the strongest temptations. I tried to dismiss the idea, — but in vain: — it haunted my waking and sleeping hours: — I

felt as if suddenly and supernaturally empowered to be the arbiter of my own destiny, — as if I had nothing to do but to seize the golden moment which would lead on to fortune.

" Such entire and tyrannic possession did this idea obtain over my mind, that at length I felt a sudden tremor lest this moment, — the very crisis of my fate,— should be actually gliding away, and flew to the gaming-table in a state of the highest excitement.

" You may guess the result : — in proportion to the vividness of my hopes, was the depth of my despair : — the fiend that had led me on now appeared to mock and insult me : — a laugh of triumph seemed sounding in my ear ; — and I returned home in a state little short of madness. After the lapse of an hour or two, a more distinct consciousness of the situation in which I was placed, dawned upon my mind, and I determined to secrete myself for a few days, till I could determine what plan to pursue. One person alone was acquainted with my hiding-place.

" Too soon did the dreadful tale of my disgrace reach me, — too soon was I made acquainted with my uncle's wrath and revenge : —

branded as a villain, — hunted as a thief, — the very dogs of justice let loose upon me. Is such ignominy to be endured? — My fate is sealed: — even if my uncle at last relented, I should be a mark for the finger of scorn; — suspicion would for ever attach to my name; — it would haunt me as my shadow: — the world would insult me either by its pity, or by its distrust. Never will I endure such a fate. I am sure my true friends will rejoice at this decision. Would you, Edward, or any man of honour and feeling, counsel me to drag on a loathsome life in the galling bonds of infamy? — No, — no: — from this, at least, I will be free, betide what will hereafter: — that way I must not look. Shall I confess it, Edward? — in these sad and solitary hours recollections of my early years, start up from the cells of memory, and fill my heart with unutterable pangs. The tender voice of my mother seems again to whisper in my ear, and the lessons she taught steal over my mind like the memory of some forgotten dream, and awaken fears and feelings long hushed to sleep; — fears which fill my heart with horror and dismay, — feelings undefined, yet terrible. But this is only for a

moment, — my spirit shall not quail: — as on the morning of battle we resolve to rush into the thickest of the fray, and bear ourselves nobly, so will I meet my fate with the courage at least of a hero. Oh, that I could, indeed, at this moment hear the shout of battle, — the cannon's thunder, — the trumpet's sound! — they would deaden the tumult within. But soon all will be quiet: — by the time you read this, the fearful strife will be over, and the world will do me justice: — all must be made public, and your fame will be cleared. This is a consoling thought, even at this awful moment.

"I have one favour to request: — look over the memorandums which you will find in my desk, and do the best you can for those whom they concern. — And now farewell! — I little thought when we last met that I should see your face no more. What a crowd of remembrances rush into my mind with that thought! — but I must not dwell upon them, lest my resolution falter. Farewell, then, — and for ever!

"Yours,

"F. CUMBERLAND."

CHAP. LXIII.

" Wisdom took up her harp and stood in place
Of frequent concourse; stood in every gate,
By every way, and walk'd in every street;
And, lifting up her voice, proclaim'd: — 'Believe;
Me follow, me whose ways are pleasantness,
Whose paths are peace, — whose end is perfect joy.'
Incredible assertion! — men rush'd on
Determinedly to ruin; shut their ears,
Their eyes, to all advice, to all reproof.
Few knew what wisdom was, though well
Defined in God's own words, and printed large
On heav'n and earth, in characters of light,
And sounded in the ear by every wind."

POLLOK.

THE details of this sad event soon made their way to the public ear, and excited the usual proportion of passing wonder and short-lived sympathy. "The shocking affair of poor Frank Cumberland" formed the topic of conversation for a few days in the world of fashion, in which he had been accustomed to mix. It was talked over in the crush-room of the opera-house, as the fair crowd waited for their carriages, and

in the brilliant saloon during the intervals of the dance. "Poor Frank Cumberland!" — his pleasant qualities, gay spirits, and lively talents, were praised, and talked of for a little while in a tone of feeling and regret, and then dismissed to make way for lighter and livelier subjects. Few or none of his gay companions laid the matter to heart: — a moment, — and a moment only, — did they pause; — then again floated along the stream of life, —

"Youth at the prow, and pleasure at the helm," —

with the same careless spirit, the same thoughtless glee; and thus is the language of warning, —the lesson of wisdom,—wasted on mortal ear.

The sympathy excited for Edward Grenville was a far less unqualified feeling. The frank-hearted and good-tempered, indeed, sincerely pitied him; — but that mellowing and softened tint which the sleep of death throws over faults and circumstances, extended not to him: — he was still in a world of competition and rivalry, where the whisper of slander was listened to nothing loth, and where the idle and thoughtless amused themselves with conjecture.

As Mrs. Grenville had predicted, he was doomed to drink deeply of the cup of mortification: — dark hints, and strange surmises, were afloat: — there was a division of opinion even among the officers of his own regiment; those who were personally attached to him pronounced his honour to be spotless, — while the less well-affected were disposed to consider the mere act of forging a signature, however qualified or palliated with respect to motive, as an eternal blot in the escutcheon of Edward; — some went so far as to say with Douglas, —

> " A writing forged! — Saint Jude to speed,
> Did ever knight so foul a deed? "

The matter was so warmly and so constantly canvassed, feuds ran so high, that they reached the ear of authority; and it was recommended, though in terms of delicacy and consideration, — and as a matter of expediency, — that Captain Grenville should sell his commission, and retire from His Majesty's service.

Evils accumulated and multiplied around him: — the strange rumours in circulation alarmed his creditors: — claimants started up on all sides. — He was found to be again deeply in debt; — and

Mrs. Grenville, terrified at the effects these clamours might produce in his present state of exasperated feeling, yet helpless as to effecting any arrangement, felt every hour more harassed and bewildered.

It was at this crisis that Sir Henry came forward and claimed the privilege of acting for her, not only as the son of her early friend, but as one who hoped that some future day would give him a deeper interest in her affections: — he unfolded to Mrs. Grenville the state of his own heart, and with great feeling and delicacy acknowledged the hopes he felt authorised to cherish, since the explanatory scene that had taken place between Gerard and Constance: — he dwelt with enthusiastic admiration on the character of his friend, and on that union of deep feeling and generous disinterestedness which it discovered, — and finally entreated her to sanction, by her approval, the hope he so fondly cherished, that the heart and hand of Constance might one day be his. — He knew too well what was due to the delicate circumstances in which all parties were placed, to urge his suit at present; — he was willing to submit to any arrangements, — to any delay: — it was his anxious

wish that the most scrupulous delicacy might be observed, — the nicest sense of propriety satisfied.

This communication dissolved the cloud of mystery which had puzzled Mrs. Grenville : — a beam of light was thrown over the past, and a thousand little inexplicable circumstances were now made clear. She saw the faults and the difficulties into which her daughter had been betrayed. The suspension of that full and frank intercourse so natural to the character of Constance had been deeply painful to her, and she longed for the moment when renewed and unreserved confidence should be established between them. Not for an instant did she withhold the sanction for which Sir Henry pleaded ; — satisfied as to essentials, had his character been less entirely to her taste than it was, she still would have left her daughter to the unfettered exercise of her own choice. — Her affection and tender sympathy for Gerard Mortimer were indeed quickened by her knowledge of the actual state of things, — yet she felt well assured, that Sir Henry's refinement and delicacy would be sure guides in such a moment, and that they would regulate with the utmost nicety the expression of his feelings. Towards

her, at the present moment, his conduct was in the highest degree tender and considerate, — towards Edward, all that was manly, kind, and generous. She now for the first time discovered that Sir Henry had been the purchaser of the family estate which Edward had sold, and that upon completing the purchase, he had assured Captain Grenville that he considered himself as holding it only on trust till circumstances permitted him to reclaim his possession.

Edward was in a state of mind that required the most delicate management. With high-souled patience did Sir Henry bear with the fierce ebullitions of irritated feeling which burst forth from this unhappy young man; — alternately soothing and remonstrating, and exerting his utmost influence to calm his mind, and throw a gleam of hope and comfort over the future.

It was decided that as soon as a compromise with his creditors could be effected, he should leave England. Sir Henry undertook to use all his influence to procure him a situation in India, or in one of the colonies, which might furnish him with employment and support. To this arrangement Edward acceded; but his feelings were in so excited a state, so capricious in their

alternations, so violent in their extremes, that Mrs. Grenville feared to leave him, and resolved to delay her return to Elton till he had actually sailed.

Sir Henry having snatched a few days to devote to his sick friend, returned to town to put affairs in train for this purpose.

Gerard, who had sympathised entirely with the anxiety of Constance in this affair, made frequent enquiries respecting the return of Mrs. Grenville, whom he longed once more to see: — as his strength declined, he felt still more desirous to gather round him those he most loved.

Constance had received frequent communications from her mother, detailing the progress of the arrangements; and her last letter had contained the information that cousin Frances had most unexpectedly joined her in town.

"Frances arrived without notice yesterday at dinner time," said Mrs. Grenville in her letter: "with her heart so full of generous purposes, and kind projects, that she was quite insensible to the fatigue of her journey. I never saw her so well, — so vigorous, — so alert: — her only regret is, that she cannot do every thing

in this affair, that I will not accept the splendid sacrifices she is disposed to make; and I really am afraid that she will replenish Edward's purse with a mischievous liberality which will effectually counteract the salutary discipline of his present circumstances. She espouses his cause with characteristic vehemence and decision, — thinks and speaks of him as the most injured of the human race, — a guiltless and persecuted being: — considers his extravagance and gay habits as the venial errors of youth, — and the unfortunate act which has been the immediate cause of his present difficulties, as a mere frolic, for which he has paid a very disproportionate penalty: — in short, she is quite in the humour to persuade herself and Edward, that he is 'one more sinned against than sinning,' — actually a martyr; — and scarcely is she to be restrained from fettering herself with a promise to make him heir to all she possesses.

"Alas! in examining into his debts and embarrassments, we have found the most painful proofs of his profligate and licentious indulgences. — Frances, however, is indignant when we venture to hint the truth, and to say that precaution and prudence are necessary

even for Edward's sake. For some time she alarmed me by declaring that she strongly recommended his remaining in England, and braving an insolent and malicious world; and it was not till I pleaded a mother's fears and anxieties, and a dread of his being involved in some desperate quarrel which might terminate fatally, that she promised to give up this project.—These circumstances, however, strengthen my desire for his immediate departure, and the assistance of Frances will materially facilitate our arrangements as to pecuniary matters.—Sir Henry is using every exertion to accelerate the business, lest her injudicious profusion and extenuating language should give a new impulse to Edward's feelings, and prevent the accomplishment of our plans."

CHAP. LXIV.

" Thou say'st I preach, Lorenzo! — 'Tis confest.
What if for once I preach thee quite awake?
Oh, the dark days of vanity! While here
How tasteless! and how terrible when gone!
Gone! they ne'er go: when past, they haunt us still:
The spirit walks of every day deceas'd;
Or smiles an angel, or a fury frowns." YOUNG.

CONSTANCE joined her mother in London for two or three days previous to the embarkation of Edward, and shared with her in all the mingled and trying feelings of the parting scene. It was one of deep emotion; for though he tried hard to assume a light and lively air, it was evident that his heart was at work. Mrs. Grenville dared not trust her voice to express the thousand fears, anxieties, and wishes which crowded into her heart; — but when the door closed, and his step was no longer heard, she took refuge for some hours in her own chamber: — there those tender fears and prayers

were poured forth, — and she at length regained strength and composure.

This appeared to her so very critical a moment in her son's life, that she resolved before he sailed, to make one more effort to awaken him to reflection; and the following letter reached him at Portsmouth.

"*To Captain Grenville.*

"In the trying moment of our separation, my dear Edward, I could only dismiss you with silent prayers and tears; — my feelings were too overwhelming to permit me either to revert to the past, or to speak of the future; but I am now more composed, and as I feel this to be a most important and critical epoch in your life, I cannot pass it over in silence. The agitating events of the last few weeks: — this sudden removal from your country and kindred, — the new aspect and colour which are thus given to your prospects in life, — are well calculated to awaken you to serious reflection; but hitherto I have had no reason to think that they have produced any effect. — I have lately seen you, indeed, under the influence of a great variety of feelings, — harassed by the keenest anxiety,

— indignant, — desponding, — irritated, — then again gay, — light, — and careless; — but I have never witnessed one symptom of penitence, or of self-abasement, — not the slightest indication of any consciousness that a life of thoughtless profligacy must be offensive in the sight of a pure and holy God.

" I have watched your disposition and habits of thought with that intense interest which glows only in a mother's bosom. — Painful, indeed, has been the result, and bitterly have I mourned over it; but I will not sorrow as one without hope. — Fruitless as my efforts have hitherto been, I will neither murmur nor despair; — I will at least make one more appeal to your understanding, your conscience, and your heart; — and may that God, who can alone order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men, assist me by his Spirit in this labour of love!

" Hitherto you have lived entirely without God in the world. — I do not believe that you ever, for one single half hour, seriously considered the relation in which you stand towards this great and glorious Being. — In vain did he shower upon you blessings in rich profusion, — life, health, strength, affluence, vigour of body

and of mind; — in vain did he place you in this magnificent world, full of the wonders of his majestic hand; — in vain did he surround you with the light of his glorious Gospel: — not one feeling of gratitude or love has ever glowed in your heart towards this your munificent Benefactor; — God is not in all your thoughts.

"With the deepest anguish have I witnessed this habitual and total forgetfulness of your Creator, your Redeemer, — your Judge. To those whose hearts have been awakened to a sense of his unspeakable power and holiness, who feel that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, such utter carelessness appears little less than absolute madness; — and when they behold it in one closely bound to them by the dearest bond of kindred, who can speak the anguish that rends the heart?

"How often, my dear Edward, in the silence of the night, when all was hushed and still, have my tears and sobs borne witness to this anguish, when, with those earnest supplications which are poured only from the full heart of parental love, I have commended you to the pardoning mercy of that God, whom you presume, in the wantonness of impiety to forget or defy! Tell me,

does this infatuated conduct arise from the delusions of infidelity, from a daring spirit of impiety, or from the benumbing influence of indifference?

"Alas! my dear, dear son, whatever may be the cause, the day will too surely come, when the Eternal and Omniscient God will no longer be forgotten or defied by the feeble creatures of his hand, — the children of dust, whom his ever blessed Son died to redeem and save; — the day will surely come, when every rich blessing, — every noble gift, — every solemn warning, — will stand in fatal array against them, — a dark and fearful record of their presumption and ingratitude.

"But that fatal day is not *yet* arrived; — God still waiteth to be gracious. — Let me implore you to pause and consider. We are separated, Edward, certainly for many a long year; — perhaps we may never meet again till we stand together before the judgment-seat: — do not, then, reject my warnings, lest at that tremendous moment you find them registered against you. — I repeat, what, alas! I have often before told you, that *self* is the idol to which you bow down; — and, preposterous as is this

species of worship, you perform it with a zeal worthy of a better object: — but you will discover that Moloch himself was not more cruel than the deity whom you have chosen; — you will find him unstable as the wind, insatiable as the grave: — the most costly offerings, the richest gifts, are vainly heaped on his altar; — perpetual incense will not satisfy him; — his service is perfect bondage. — Oh, while it is yet time, escape from this slavery, — and turn to that God whose service is perfect freedom.

"I sometimes doubt whether, even in creed, you are a Christian; but I am sure your indifference to eternal things is practical infidelity. Can you really believe that you have an immortal soul, — that there is an eternal state, — that after death is judgment, — and yet devote all the brief span of life to voluptuous pleasure? Has not the experience of the last month or two convinced you of the utter worthlessness of the joys and friendships of mere men of the world? — What a reed has that world proved to you! — you leaned upon it in perfect confidence, and it has pierced you to the quick. — Revert for a few minutes to the past: — what register does memory present? — Those hours that lately

smiled, — where are they now? what record do they bear? — They have been frittered away in dissipation, or polluted by vice: — not one ennobling pursuit, not one that even bore the semblance of usefulness, has been thought of. — Where is the human being who has been benefited by your exertions or by your example?

"You will tell me, perhaps, that the time for action had not yet arrived; that you would have been faithful to your king, and fought the battles of your country like a hero. — I believe it: — nor do I undervalue that spirit which exclaims, 'What pity that we can die but once to serve our country!' — But could the performance of one duty have atoned for the total neglect of every other? even this duty, which you considered so redeeming, you have not been permitted to fulfil. Circumstances, arising out of your own folly and levity, have disappointed the hope.

"But let us look at the past only as a warning and a stimulus: — let all the energies of your mind be directed to the future. — It is my consolation to believe, that, though you have utterly neglected and forgotten your God, he has not forgotten or abandoned you; — it is my

consolation to believe, that, by the discipline of circumstances, he is seeking, like a merciful Father, to bring you home to himself. With skill far too wondrous for mortal eye to trace, he can educe good from evil. By this discipline, you are detached from the idle, loose, and profligate connections which were fast hurrying you on to ruin. — A new career, less brilliant perhaps, but more secure, is open to you: — a fresh impulse may now be given to all your habits, thoughts, and feelings. — Are honour, reputation, happiness, the friendship of the wise and good, — peace of conscience, and peace with God, — worth possessing? — If they are, let me again implore you to pause and consider: — all may yet be yours; — it may not yet be too late.

" Seek, by active usefulness, by generous self-sacrifice, to promote the happiness of others, and, by so doing, you will secure your own: — above all, implore the grace of God. Since the days of infancy, when, with your little hands clasped in mine, you lisped out your morning and evening prayers, I fear you have seldom or never fulfilled this duty. — Oh, begin from this moment, my dear son; — pray for pardon in that name of mighty power which must ever prevail;

— study the record of God's holy will; — pray for the assistance of his Spirit; — it will not be denied: — think of life, not as a toy with which you may sport at pleasure, but contemplate its noble purposes, — its lofty destination.

" If you pray earnestly, — perseveringly, — new desires and affections, — new habits and feelings, — will be gradually formed within your bosom; — you will wonder at the thraldom in which you have been held, at the guilty indifference you have discovered, at the folly and vanity which have set their seal on every hour, — and you will renounce your present sinful pleasures for pursuits commensurate with the dignity of an immortal being; — you will feel that of your actions angels are the spectators, and God will be the Judge.

" What a glow of feeling does the very thought of such a change excite in my heart! — And will you not realize this delightful hope? Much, dearest Edward, would I sacrifice for your temporal comfort; — but if, by such sacrifice, I could secure your eternal happiness, gladly, thankfully, would I exchange my lot for that of the houseless and shivering mendicant who begs from door to door.

"What a tide of emotion, what a gush of tenderness, fills my bosom at this moment! — the deep, strong, deathless love within a mother's breast, quickened by the fears and sympathies of the Christian. — My thoughts will follow you across the world of waters; — they will be with you in the stillness of evening, in the deep silence of midnight, in the glad brightness of morning. — How many wishes will be breathed, — how many prayers will be offered up for you! — But I must check these overflowing feelings, take courage, and bid you once more farewell. — May God bless you now and ever!

"So prays your most affectionate mother,

"H. GRENVILLE."

CHAP. LXV.

" Haste to my pillow, bear
Those fragrant things and fair:
My hand no more may bind them up at eve;
Yet shall their odour soft,
One bright dream round me waft,
Of life, youth, summer, — all that I must leave."

MRS. HEMANS.

" When the spark of life is waning,
Weep not for me.
When the languid eye is straining,
Weep not for me.
When the feeble pulse is ceasing,
Start not at its swift decreasing;
'Tis the fetter'd soul's releasing —
Weep not for me."

DALE.

As the life of Gerard drew towards its close, a deep thoughtfulness — a sweet and calm seriousness — pervaded his mind. — Strong in faith, — rich in hope, — his eye pierced through the gloom of the grave, and rested with the serenity of holy confidence on the bright scenes beyond it. — He knew in whom he had believed; — he knew the mighty arm that had won the victory,

and he felt that it would guide him safely even through the dim valley of the shadow of death. A tender anxiety for those around him, as it respected their immediate comfort, — and still more those interests which would endure for ever, seemed the prevailing feeling.

" You look much paler and thinner than usual, dear Constance," said he, as she sat by his couch reading. — " I fear that I am doing you mischief.

" It would be strange, indeed, if I could look otherwise at such a moment," replied Constance; " but you have done me nothing but good. — The lessons which I learn every day from you sink deep into my heart: — never can they be forgotten. — Who can see your deep humility, — your meek resignation, — your sweet, patient endurance of suffering — without feeling the full worth of those holy principles by which your life has been guided? — Never, never was I so convinced of their inestimable — their incalculable value ! "

" My dearest Constance," said Gerard, a glow of delight for a moment mantling his faded cheek, " you know not how sweetly those words fall on my ear, and what joy they kindle in my

heart. — Thanks be to God, who, in accomplishing his own gracious purposes, deigns to employ the most feeble instruments. — Cherish these impressions, my beloved one, by fervent prayer, by constant vigilance. — Feed and trim the lamp that is graciously placed in your hands, and the cry 'the bridegroom cometh' will be welcome to your ear as the song of the seraphim. — Faint not, — slumber not in your Christian course, lest that cry be one of terror instead of joy."

"Pray for me, dear Gerard," said Constance with deep emotion: — "'the prayer of the righteous availeth much.'"

"Morning, noon, and midnight are my prayers breathed for you, dearest: — your eternal welfare seems more precious to me even than my own; — but trust not in your own strength, — the arm of Omnipotence will fight for you, — only trust in it. Fear not to take a decided part: — there is work in the vineyard for the most feeble hand, — very much for yours. — A career of usefulness is open before you: — now is the time, — now is the day, — think not lightly of your own influence, — of your own example; — youth, — health, — time, — fortune, — influence, — they

are precious talents. — I pray, dearest, that your path may be one of pleasantness and peace, and, above all, that it may be that path which leadeth to life eternal. — Remember that when your eyes like mine are about to close on the things of time, and to open on those of eternity, your prevailing regret will be that so little has been done, — so much left undone : — in these moments, conscience seems to pour a flood of light over the past, and our mistakes and negligences are seen with inconceivable and painful distinctness."

" Surely, Gerard," said Constance, " you can have few with which to charge yourself: — you whose life has been so pure, — so devoted."

" If at this awful moment my hopes were built on my own claims to reward, dear Constance, dark and desolate would be this hour. — No, I have a stronger anchor, — a surer refuge : — the spotless robe I hope to wear is not of my own righteousness. — In the life which appears to you upon the whole, devoted to God and to duty, how much of negligence and self-indulgence can I trace ! — I have sported with many precious gifts of my heavenly Father : —

health, for instance; — with what strong feelings of compunction do I revert to the waste of that talent ! "

" Alas ! for us," said Constance ; — " but not for you : — you enter only earlier on your bright reward."

" No, no, Constance, — to waste health, nay, life itself, for a wreath of bays, is no venial error : — the smiling visions that beckoned me forward, — the idle dreams by which I was enchanted, — the whispers of applauding voices so welcome to my delighted ear : — what are they now ? — It was self-indulgence, after all : — my love of study, my desire of fame, were inordinate, and, therefore, culpable. — An only son, Constance, should have been temperate in his intellectual banquets for a father's sake ; — a Christian from a higher and holier motive : — my father's hearth will be lonely, — the evening of his life solitary." —

" Not solitary, — not lonely, Gerard," exclaimed Constance, " if my feeble efforts can avail. — Alas ! the loss he may too soon sustain will, indeed, be irreparable, — for who is there in this world that can be to him what you are ? — Where will be the mind that may mingle

with his own in delightful and holy companionship? but if a deep and affectionate sympathy has power to soothe ——"

Constance stopped, vainly endeavouring to suppress the gush of feeling which choked her utterance.

"Yes," exclaimed Gerard, "dearest Constance, — he will not be wholly bereaved of his children; — in you he will have a daughter still."

"Oh, doubt it not," replied Constance: — "a daughter tender, watchful, devoted."

"Thanks, thanks, my beloved one; — there is balm in that sweet promise. — I know it will be all fulfilled. — Sir Henry, — he to whom you will be so dear a treasure, will help you in this labour of love: — for all the generous and kindly sympathies of his nature will be awakened."

Constance listened to any allusion of this kind from her friend with downcast and painful confusion. — A consciousness of injustice towards him, weighed upon her heart, and was expressed in her eloquent countenance.

"Dearest!" exclaimed Gerard, taking both her hands within his, after having looked at her for some time with deep interest, — "do any

self-upbraidings still mingle with your recollections of the past?"

The flushed cheek and quivering lip of Constance answered intelligibly.

"For my sake," continued Gerard, "hush them to sleep. — Spare me the pain of believing that a remembrance of me may fall like a blight on your sunny prospects. — If you knew, — if you could at all guess, — how precious your happiness is to my heart, you would feel assured that no selfish regrets can now mingle with the contemplation of your future lot: — unfeignedly do I rejoice that the sweetest solace — the dearest joy that mortal heart can taste — may yet be yours, — yours in all its warmth and purity. — For my sake, dear Constance, do not suffer an over-wrought and exaggerated feeling of delicacy towards me, to interfere with the accomplishment of Sir Henry's wishes. — Had my strength wasted less rapidly, I should have preferred a request that would have secured this accomplishment before I close my eyes on mortal joys and sorrows. — With thankfulness, if not with perfect serenity, could I bestow this dear hand on our beloved friend. After

this acknowledgment, my love, you will dismiss for ever all regrets and self-reproaches."

Gerard paused; — but Constance was too much agitated to speak a word.

"Let me implore you," continued he, "not to allow any recollections of your departed friend to cloud this delightful union. — I would live, indeed, in your remembrance, but only as the brother of your heart, — the fond and faithful friend, with whom you took sweet counsel: — as one whose dying hours you cheered with the sunshine of woman's tenderness, — with the pure devotedness of a sister's love. — If the disembodied spirit may be permitted to revisit the scene of its earthly trials, with what refined and holy joy should I contemplate your fulfilling the sweet duties of conjugal and domestic life: — yourself pursuing, and teaching others to pursue, that path which shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

Again Gerard paused, and fervently pressed the hand of Constance.

"Dwell less, my sweet friend," resumed he, "on the present moment, — on the human love that I have borne you, — and more on the unspeakable privilege reserved for those who press

forward to the glorious prize: — think of the rapture of re-union where all will be peace, and purity, and joy. — A few years of conflict, dear Constance: — a few years made up of light and shade — of storm and sunshine, — and the spirits of the just made perfect shall mingle in holy communion in the kingdom of their Father."

"I could almost wish that the blessed moment were already come, Gerard, — that life with its joys and cares were over,"— said Constance, in a tone of passionate feeling.

"Say not so, dearest," returned Gerard; — "look not with a morbid eye upon life and its enjoyments, — for many are in mercy shed over it by our heavenly Father. — I have found, indeed, that mortal hopes are vain and perishing: — I bid them farewell, and, thanks to Him who hath triumphed over death and the grave! without reluctance. — I will not say even 'Fain would I stay for thee:' — but the balmy air that now breathes upon me, — the bright beam that gladdens earth and skies,— call to my remembrance things fair and fragrant of this world; — the soft green light of the woods, — the deep repose of the forest and the stream, — the melodies of morning, — the stillness of

evening, — with what rapture have they filled my heart! — At this moment the full and vivid recollection of the loveliness of nature makes it thrill with delight and gratitude."

Gerard stopped, to enjoy for a moment the sweet visions that memory presented.

"Then, Constance," resumed he, "the sphere of usefulness that opens to a Christian, — the hearts that may be gladdened by his beneficence, or consoled by his sympathy, — the minds that he may enlighten, — the souls, perhaps, that may be saved, — are not these things worth living for, Constance? — It is only the selfish and the useless, — those who tread the dull round of self-indulgence, and of luxurious indolence, — to whom life is joyless. — Think of it as a precious boon; — for the record of its days and years must be inscribed in the book of God. To the Christian, the charities and sympathies of nature are all sweetened and sanctified, so that they are enjoyed with a keener and purer relish. Think thus, dearest Constance, and life will have much blessedness in store for you, — eternity, blessedness that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.' — And now, perhaps, you will do me the favour

to resume our reading, and indulge me with the twenty-third Psalm; — it is a treasury of comfort."

Constance read in a low and faltering tone; and upon Mr. Mortimer's coming into the room she placed the book in his hands, and retired to compose her feelings.

CHAP. LXVI.

" Oh, weep not for him, 'tis unkindness to weep;
The weary weak frame has but fallen asleep.
No more of fatigue or endurance it knows;
Oh, weep not; oh, break not the gentle repose.

" Weep not that so soon he is gone to be blest:
He gave to his God the first hours and the best.
Can the labourer cease from his labour too soon?
He wrought all the morning, and rested at noon."

NEALE.

UPON Mrs. Grenville's return to Elton, she found a considerable change for the worse in the invalid: — he was too feeble to leave his apartment, and could converse but a few minutes, and at distant intervals. — He welcomed her, however, with the same smile of warm affection, — and they had several brief but interesting interviews. — She saw, alas! that the parting hour rapidly drew nigh.

" Still heavenly hope's undying flame
Shone midst the wreck of nature's frame;
And through the mortal could she see
The germ of immortality."

Too soon did the trying moment come: — in less than a fortnight after her return, a message arrived one morning at the Priory, with the tidings that Gerard was much worse. — In a fit of coughing he had ruptured a blood-vessel, — and his last hour was fast approaching.

Mrs. Grenville and Constance hastened to the Rectory: — with noiseless step they entered the sick room, and drew near the bed. — Mr. Mortimer was supporting his dying son, and wiping from his brow the cold dew of death: — he stood by his side, suffering, yet resigned; — the unutterable anguish of parental feeling chastised by the deep submission of the Christian.

As Constance drew near, Gerard faintly articulated, "God bless you!" and feebly pressed her hand in his; —while she threw herself on her knees, and hid her face, vainly endeavouring to stifle the sobs that burst from her full heart. — Mrs. Grenville glided round to the opposite side of the bed, to assist in supporting him.

For some time the silence that reigned through the chamber was only broken by the heavy breathing of the sufferer, and the half-suppressed emotion of those around him: — at length his countenance wore a quieter expression, and

the struggle of mortal agony appeared to subside.

In a low, but distinct tone, Mr. Mortimer repeated some passages of Scripture, which might soothe the parting spirit. — Gerard caught the words, " I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:" — his dim eye for a moment beamed with the brightness of Christian hope, — a holy and heavenly calm diffused itself over his countenance, chasing away the expression of pain: he clasped still closer the hand of Constance; — a faint sound of blessing and thanksgiving was heard, and, with a gentle sigh, his redeemed and purified spirit was dismissed to the bosom of his Father and his God.

CHAP. LXVII.

" How sadly vacant turns the frequent gaze
To where the mourn'd one smiled in other days;
The eye that glisten'd with the gen'rous thought;
The glowing mind with worth and wisdom fraught;
The twilight walk by some romantic stream,
Where Friendship warm'd, while Fancy wove her dream;
The smile, and wish, and all the faithful heart
Delights to trace in Memory's mazy chart,
Return upon us! — Omnipresent Power!
'Tis thine to lull this agonising hour,
To charm the burden from the soul, and give
The tears that solace, and the hopes that live."

R. MONTGOMERY.

How sad and solemn is the pause that succeeds the mournful task of watching by the dying couch of a beloved object, when the eyes are closed, and the lip mute; when we no longer

" Weep, and watch, and pray, to hold back dust from dust;"

when the deep solicitude, the anxious tenderness which occupied every passing moment, are exchanged for that dreary leisure in which the memory and the heart alone are fondly busy!

One pervading interest now interrupted this leisure; — it was strong and deep sympathy for Mr. Mortimer. — Nor was this feeling confined to those bosom friends who had shared and softened the melancholy duties of the last few weeks; — it extended through a much wider circle. — Gerard had been loved much for his own sake; but as the only child of their beloved pastor, he was deeply mourned throughout the village of Elton. — The noiseless crowd that assembled round his grave, — the bursting sob that broke upon the ear amidst the hush and stillness, — the silent tears that were shed, — bore testimony to the fulness of this sympathy.

The grief of the bereaved father was, indeed, of that deep character which seeks not the solace of sympathy, nor the relief of expression: — it was a sorrow over which time itself had little power. — The colour and aspect of the world around him had changed; — its brightness had faded, its light had become dull and dim. — True, he mourned this beloved son

—— " with a lofty trust,
With a glad faith, whose eye to track the just
Through shades and mysteries lifts a glance of love; "—

yet did he weep: — neither the bright hopes nor the chastened feelings of a Christian spirit prevented those bursts of acute sorrow, — those moments of agonizing recollection, — which thrill through the tender and bereaved heart. — These, however, were seldom betrayed to human eye. — In a few weeks Mr. Mortimer resumed his clerical duties, and was again found instructing the ignorant, — cheering the mourner, — and speaking peace to the penitent: — again he welcomed his friends with his own sweet and gracious smile; — again he resumed his accustomed seat at the Priory, and mingled with calm seriousness in the intercourse of social life. — To those who had lived in the warm affections of Gerard he was attached by a solemn and tender tie: — they were

"Peculiar people; — death had made them dear."

Among these Constance held the first place: — she dwelt upon the memory of the friend she had lost with the tenderness of a fond and devoted sister, mingled with a sentiment of ardent gratitude: — nor could all the tender soothings which his gentle spirit had devised while it lingered

on earth, save her from the pangs of keen self-reproach, — from a thrill of anguish, as she thought of him

> —— "whose melancholy love
> On her was lavished ——
> Stealing the brightness of his life away."

Reviewing her conduct by the glowing light of an awakened conscience, she mourned over that pride of character which had betrayed her into so much error, and a more gentle and subdued tone gradually infused itself into her manners, feelings, and opinions: — she became more lowly in her own eyes, and more lovely in the eyes of those around her. — Her soothing attentions to Mr. Mortimer were as endearing as they were unwearied. — Gerard had requested, that his father might be spared the pain which a disclosure of the circumstances must have occasioned, — and he looked upon Constance with the tenderest feeling of which his heart remained susceptible: — to her he could pour out all his thoughts; — to her he could talk of his fervent aspirations after that blessed re-union to which his hopes looked forward: — those vivid, realising hopes which animate and tranquillise the aching heart: — but his intellectual pursuits

had lost their charm ; — there was not one, indeed, that did not remind him with painful force of the loss he had sustained ; — how many delightful hours had passed in the animated discussion, or the rich enjoyment of such subjects ! — As he reverted to them, the sweet full tones of Gerard's voice seemed again for a moment to vibrate on his ear ; — but the vacant chair, — the silent apartment, — the books which no hand now disturbed, — chased away the fond illusion.

Sometimes he would open a favourite author, and try to con over the pages in which he had once delighted ; — then close the book with a gentle sigh, and a consciousness that the effort had been useless. — His garden was no longer a paradise of sweets : — the tangling weed spread its rank luxuriance amidst the bright gay flowers, and the ruddy fruit fell unheeded to the ground. — His duties as a clergyman were the strongest link that now bound him to earth, and he fulfilled them with a deeper and more intense interest than ever ; — he no longer looked to this world as a scene of enjoyment ; — but still it was a field of usefulness : — one feeling ruled and reigned in his bosom, — the desire of doing

good. — A sense of the utter vanity of human wishes and joys pressed upon his heart, and he felt inconceivably anxious that all around him should anchor their hopes in a sure haven, and build upon that rock which could alone stand in majestic stability amidst the storms and tempests of life. — His heart still glowed with holy charity for all his fellow-men; but his hopes and affections were detached from earth; — they were spiritualised and fixed on heaven.

CHAP. LXVIII.

" Death loves a shining mark, a signal blow ;
A blow which, while it executes, alarms ;
And startles numbers with a single fall.

" That shining shield invites the tyrant's spear,
As if to damp our elevated aims,
And strongly preach humility to man.
O, how portentous is prosperity ! " YOUNG.

THE first circumstance that called Mr. Mortimer from his retirement was a letter announcing the sudden death of Mr. Seymour. It was one of those awful and striking events which for a moment appal the least reflective ; — a warning voice sounding in the ear of the gay and thoughtless sons of mirth.

Mr. Seymour was entertaining a large party of guests with his usual ease and vivacity : — never had his wit appeared more brilliant, his spirits more light and buoyant. — The table was covered with a profusion of costly wines and fruits, — and Helen presided at it with winning grace. The transient gloom which had

saddened her spirits on the loss of her cousin had passed away: — her bright laughing eyes appeared to be undimmed by sorrow;—her open, unclouded brow expressed only gaiety and joy. Mr. Seymour was relating an anecdote, with that peculiar humour which fixed the delighted attention of his auditors, — when a sudden change was observed in his countenance; — the sparkling eye became dim, and his voice stopped; — his lips quivered with convulsive agony; — he fell back in his chair, — and after a few minutes' fearful struggle, was borne a corpse to his own apartment.

The guests, shuddering, and overwhelmed with horror, gradually withdrew from the scene; and, after the lapse of an hour or two, Helen was left alone, kneeling in utter hopelessness beside the couch on which the remains of her father lay extended.

Oh, with what potent and convincing oratory did the voice of death speak to her heart! How fearful was the contrast presented by the morning and evening of one little day!

That morning, Mr. Seymour had risen, apparently, in full vigour of body and mind: — he had pleaded a cause for which he had been

retained, with more than his accustomed ability: — hundreds had been convinced by his masterly reasoning, — hundreds had paid delighted homage to his powerful eloquence: — there never had been a prouder moment for Mr. Seymour, — and now that eloquent tongue was mute; — those eyes beaming with bright intelligence were for ever closed; — the spirit had returned to God who gave it.

Alas! what availed it, that he had been the idol of an admiring world; — that he had drunk every cup of joy; — that he had heard the silver voice of Fame? — He had known nothing of wisdom, — that true wisdom which is

> —— "highest when it stoops
> Lowest before the holy throne, — throws down
> Its crown abased, — forgets itself, — and breathes
> Adoring praise."

Alas! he had been ambitious only to be praised of men; — not to be approved by God; — not to have his name recorded in the book of life: — and now the world with its pageantry and pride had passed away like a shadow; — he had closed his eyes for ever on that scene in which he had lived, and thought, and toiled,

— and opened them on a world of eterna. realities.

To Helen the sad scene appeared like a dreadful and bewildering dream: — a benumbing stupor seemed to steal over her, and to lock up at once her faculties and feelings: — she suffered herself to be conducted to her chamber, and there remained passive and motionless, unable to shed a tear, or to utter a sound. Thus she continued till Mr. Mortimer hastened to her.

The sight of this sympathising friend seemed to loosen the springs of grief within her bosom; — a deep sob relieved her heart, and, throwing herself into his arms with a piercing cry, she wept without restraint. — His kind and soothing tenderness in some degree quieted the perturbation of her mind; and he was also the bearer of a message from Mrs. Grenville and Constance, proposing to share with her these melancholy hours: — she thankfully acceded to the plan, — and the next day they arrived in Portland Place, where they remained a fortnight after the last mournful duties were performed; when Helen was persuaded to return with them to Elton.

Mr. Mortimer, upon whom, in conjunction with Mr. Seymour's son-in-law, the task of examining into the state of his affairs devolved, discovered that they were in the greatest confusion. Large as had been his resources, they were exhausted and exceeded by his lavish expenditure; — and it was too soon apparent that after the various claimants on his property had been satisfied, Helen would be pennyless. Mr. Mortimer avoided entering upon the subject with his niece in her present state of feeling, — but satisfied himself with pressing her to share his solitary home, by making it hers for the next few months; — and at this moment the retirement of the Rectory harmonised so well with her depressed spirits, that she gratefully accepted his proposal.

CHAP. LXIX.

" Why then a final note prolong,
Or lengthen out a closing song,
Unless to bid the gentles speed,
Who long have listed to my rede?
To every lovely lady bright,
What can I wish but faithful knight?
To every faithful lover, too,
What can I wish but lady true?
To all, to each, a fair good night,
And pleasing dreams, and slumbers light."

MARMION.

A VERY short time had elapsed after the circumstances just detailed, when Sir Henry received the following laconic epistle from Percy: —

" *To Sir Henry Lennox.*

" Dear Harry,

" Report says that poor Seymour died insolvent, and that Helen is not worth one sixpence; — *ergo*, I beg to announce that it is my unalterable resolution to make her an offer of my home, heart, and hand, with all convenient speed.

"The moment etiquette permits, I shall be at her feet.

"Ever, dear Harry,

"Affectionately yours,

"PERCY LENNOX."

Sir Henry smiled at this characteristic effusion, and well assured that remonstrance or caution would be alike ineffectual, busied himself in considering by what pecuniary arrangements Percy might be protected from the possible consequences of his own imprudence. — That Miss Seymour would resist the combined attraction of his love and disinterestedness, Sir Henry thought highly improbable: — he, therefore, could only solace himself with the hope, that recent events might give a more subdued tone to her character, — and that marriage, with its serious feelings and duties, might have a happy and controlling influence over the wild spirits and light heart of Percy.

With his own hopes and prospects, he was busy in thought, though not in deed. — He knew that a year or two must elapse before Constance would allow their engagement to be

made known to the world. — Time, however, sped on, though Sir Henry now and then accused him of folding his wings.

Nearly two years had passed away, — and his constant visits at the Priory began once more to excite the speculations of the Elton world.

"I am told," said Mrs. Bentley, as she poured out the tea for a little party collected in her snug parlour; — "I am told, — but I don't know how true it is, for there are such reports, that one does not know what to believe; — but they do say, that Sir Henry is at Mrs. Grenville's every evening, — and that the settlements are actually drawing up."

"Yes, yes," said Mrs. Somers, with great glee, "the lawyers are vastly busy, I understand, and so much the better; — it was always clear, that he doated upon Constance: — I saw that plainly enough; — there needed no ghost to tell us that tale, — and no wonder, I am sure: — she is a charming creature! a great favourite of mine she always was, and will be."

"She is tired of wearing the willow for poor Gerard Mortimer, I suppose," said Miss Twyford, sarcastically.

"Ah! there was some little mystery there, that we do not quite understand, I fancy," said Mrs. Somers, sagaciously.

"For my part, I cannot comprehend such things," added Jessy, with a pensive sigh;— "but I always suspected that she had no heart."

Jessy, just at this time, sported the penseroso mood: — she now was wont, whenever she recollected it, to assume

> "An even step, and musing gait,
> And looks commercing with the skies, —
> Her rapt soul sitting in her eyes;" —

in short, the costume that befitted the genius of Melancholy. — No eligible lover had presented himself since Edward Grenville had left England; therefore it suited her to make the most of that event: — had he remained on this side the Pacific, the flirtation would speedily have died a natural death, and Jessy must have settled the matter with her dignity as well as she could; but, under the present arrangement, she could personate *the victim of circumstances* with some effect, and no very considerable violation of probability.

"Well, — I confess I rather wonder at the gentleman," said Mrs. Murray.

"Wonder at him!" echoed Mrs. Somers: — "I am sure he is vastly lucky to get such a prize, — and so he thinks himself, I can tell you; — and Lady Lennox and Miss Caroline are quite delighted; — they like it, of all things; — and Sir Henry and his lady will be such blessings to the neighbourhood!"

"There is one person I do feel for," said Miss Twyford, with emphasis; — "poor Mr. Mortimer! — it cannot be a pleasant thing to him."

"Oh, you are quite mistaken, indeed!" exclaimed Mrs. Somers: — "Constance Grenville and Sir Henry Lennox are the two persons whom he loves best upon earth now; — and to see them united and happy will give real pleasure to his excellent, benevolent heart."

"Really, Mrs. Somers, every thing is *couleur de rose* in your descriptions," returned Miss Twyford.

"I wonder whether Mrs. Egerton will be present at the ceremony," enquired Mrs. Murray.

"Why, I do suppose so," said Mrs. Somers: — "it would be a rash thing, indeed, to leave

out cousin Frances. — I am sure an omission of this kind once cost a friend of mine very dear: — it was Major Blandford of the Scotch Greys: — he happened not to include an old cousin of his, a Mrs. Hunsdon, of Hunsdon Hall, in the number of his wedding guests, and the old lady never forgave it. — It came out afterwards that she absolutely revoked a will that she had made in his favour, and left her property to go quite in another channel, — to people, too, that did not want it the least in the world, — the Russeltons, as wealthy a family as any in Cumberland. — Mr. Russelton had inherited two estates before, — we always called him the rich Russelton, — and he had but one son, who turned out very ill, I heard; — quite spoiled, I suppose, by prosperity and indulgence: — so the Hunsdon property did more harm than good there.— Now, Major Blandford was a fine, high-spirited officer, with very little besides his pay, and married a lady without a sixpence, — a very sweet creature, to be sure, she was, — of the O'Donnel family, — Irish they were; — and she was all spirit, grace, and vivacity: — but a little more money would have done them no harm; — and I must say, I was mightily sorry that Mrs.

Hunsdon was so tiresome. — Certainly, whether cousin Frances is present or not is of no consequence to Sir Henry in that point of view, — he has enough already; — but I dare say she will be invited, — Mrs. Grenville is so considerate."

"And Percy and his lady, of course," added Mrs. Jones.

"It will make the neighbourhood quite gay," rejoined Mrs. Somers; — "such matches are not every-day things: — we are very fortunate I am sure, to have the charming pair at Elton."

"I should imagine the neighbourhood would gain very little," said Miss Twyford; "for I dare say *she* will drop all her old friends."

We are disposed to differ from Miss Twyford; — we cannot believe that Constance will drop all her old friends. — Availing ourselves for a moment of the magic glass sometimes intrusted to certain favoured mortals, we take a peep at the future: — it presents to us Constance, the beloved wife of Sir Henry, presiding at the Manor House, with that winning courtesy which springs from a gracious spirit,

— the impatience of a lively and vivacious mind tempered by the sweet influence of piety; — for Constance has drunk deeply at the fount of wisdom, — and she has learned that meekness and humility are "pearls of great price."

—— "From day to day
Wisdom and virtue mark her peaceful way.
Her friends are many, — and the cheerful breast
Spreads wide around her happiness and rest.
She has sweet words and pleasant looks for all,
And precious kindness at the mourner's call;
And pure religion, thine eternal light,
Beams round that brow in mortal beauty bright."

We see Sir Henry displaying, in his bright example, not only all that is refined in taste, but all that is attractive in goodness.

We see Constance dearer than ever to her mother, because her moral taste is becoming every day more exquisitely pure and delicate: — we see her cheering the languid hours of Lady Lennox, and casting a sunny gleam over the evening of her days.

Mr. Herbert has his own arm-chair at the fire-side, and talks with all his accustomed fluency and glee; — and Mr. Mortimer, that cherished friend, that beloved pastor, is there also: — a mournful shade sometimes steals over

his brow, — but he contemplates the group around him with a benignant eye; reminding them, by the holy beauty of his example, and by many words of gentle counsel, that there is a fairer scene, even than the fairest that this world can show, to which they must aspire, — a region of purity and peace, — a land where all is bright and deathless!

THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

Lately published by the same Author,

GERALDINE; or, MODES OF FAITH AND PRACTICE. A Tale. Second edition. 3 vols. 12mo. 1*l.* 1*s.* in boards.

LECTURES ON PARABLES, selected from the New Testament. Sixth edition. 8*s.* in boards.

LECTURES ON MIRACLES, selected from the New Testament. Fourth edition. 8*s.* in boards.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 049772608